OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN A MULTINATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract
The research aims to identify and solve challenges in cross-cultural communication in a multinational environment. With sustainable global change and a push for inclusiveness and diversity, it is important to understand and bridge cultural differences. The study explores strategies to overcome communication barriers and facilitate more effective collaboration. The research method used is qualitative, using literary research as its primary method. The results of this study show that overcoming the barriers to cross-cultural communication requires appropriate strategies. These efforts include cultivating respect and awareness of other cultures, preparing effective translations to overcome language barriers, using appropriate communication technologies, promoting inclusiveness and participation of all team members, and conducting regular evaluations and feedback. Thus, organizations can create a conducive working environment that supports productivity, innovation, and effective teamwork.
Keywords: Communication, Intercultural, Multinational Environment.

Introduction

In an era of globalization, companies face significant opportunities and challenges in expanding their market reach, increasing production efficiency, and leveraging cheaper resources in different parts of the world. (Kiratli, O. S. 2023). The process of globalization enables closer inter-national economic integration, which can lead to homogenization in various economic and cultural aspects. However, the impact of globalisation can also lead to inter-state economic inequalities and increase disparities in the distribution of wealth. (Zhang, Y. 2022).

Globalization opens up opportunities for companies to operate in global markets, facilitating cultural and economic exchanges, as well as enhancing

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interpopulation interactions around the world. (Zelinska et al., 2022). The understanding of globalization in this context encompasses the acceleration of the movement of people, goods, services, and even cultural practices, all of which drive more intense cross-border interactions. It demands companies to be more adaptive, innovative, and sensitive to cultural differences in order to succeed in this dynamic global environment. (Zaika et al., 2022).

Companies in today's globalized era, have grown into multinational organizations operating in different countries with different cultures. (Zaika et al., 2022). The success of communication in this organization is strongly influenced by cross-cultural understanding, understanding and appreciating cultural differences is crucial (Calabro et al., 2022). (Zegers, C., & Auron, M. 2022). So cross-cultural communication is crucial, because it can understand differences, enhance collaboration, increase productivity, prevent conflict, develop good working relationships, and develop employee skills. (Ogbogu et al., 2022).

Thus, it is important for multinationals to develop effective cross-cultural communication strategies to maximize efficiency and productivity. Therefore, communication within an organization is crucial in achieving the desired goal.

Inter-organizational communication is the process of exchanging information, ideas, and messages between two or more organizations. It can include organizations in the same sector, different sectors, or between public and private institutions. Inter-organization communication is essential to negotiate, collaborate, and coordinate to common goals. (Aririguzoh, S. 2022). Factors such as message clarity, effective communication channels, frequency of interaction, and understanding of organizational culture can influence the success of communication between organizations. However, cross-cultural communication barriers often occur in environments like this that potentially cause conflict within the company and impede the global performance of the company. (Heinrich et al., 2022).

Besides, cross-cultural communication barriers can be very detrimental to a company's performance, especially if the company operates in many countries or has a culturally diverse workforce. It can lead to loss of efficiency, decrease in productivity, conflict and employee stress, decreased job satisfaction, impaired decision-making, loss of leadership, financial loss, reputation loss, limited innovation, and difficulties in global expansion. (Bukhkalo et al., 2023).

Thus, given these negative impacts, it is important for companies to recognize and overcome barriers to cross-cultural communication through training, recruiting staff with multicultural expertise, and implementing inclusive and efficient communication strategies.

The inability to communicate effectively between cultures can be caused by various factors, such as language differences, stereotypes and prejudices, as well as differences in cultural norms and values. To that end, the study focuses on two main

questions: what are the barriers to cross-cultural communication in a multinational environment? And how is an effective way to overcome these barriers?

It is hoped that the results of this research can provide a better understanding of the barriers and strategies in cross-cultural communication, as well as contribute to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of cross-culture communication in multinationals. Moreover, these findings can be a benchmark in building cooperation and harmony in a multicultural working environment.

Research Method

The method of literature research is one of the approaches in conducting research that focuses on the collection, analysis and analysis of literary sources relevant to a research topic or problem. (Damgaard et al., 2001; Pathak et al., 2013). In this method, researchers focus on existing data such as books, journal articles, research reports, and other written sources. The primary objective is to gain a broader understanding of research topics, evaluate existing publications, and identify gaps or gaps in research that can still be further explored. (Malagon-Maldonado, 2014; Oun & Bach, 2014).

There are several steps that are generally undertaken in literature research, among others: 1) keyword search, i.e. search for literature relevant to the research topic using appropriate keywords; 2) selection of sources, that is, selecting the most relevant and qualitative literature from the number of sources found. This selection is important to ensure that research is based on reliable sources; 3) content analysis, ie reading and analyzing the content of the sources selected to identify findings, arguments, and theories relevant to research; and 4) writing, where the researcher summarizes and synthesizes findings from the literature that has been analyzed to produce a solid theoretical framework for his research. (Mayer, 2015; Bahn & Weatherill, 2013).

Result and Discussion
Intercultural Communication Theory

Cross-cultural communication is the process of exchanging, transmitting, or transferring ideas or ideas of one culture to another. The aim is to influence each other, which can occur between two or more cultures. This process allows for understanding and cooperation between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds (Rensibu, C. 2022). (Rensibu, C. 2022).

There are several key concepts in cross-cultural communication that are important to understand: 1) Cultural context: Cultural context refers to conditions or environments that affect a person's behavior, values, and ways of communicating. Cross-cultural communication distinguishes between high-context and low-contextual cultures. High-Context cultures (such as Japanese and Arabic) tend to rely on non-verbal contexts and nuances in communication, whereas low-contact cultures, such as the

United States and Germany, tend to be explicit and direct in the message delivered. 2) Communication Ethics: How consistency and social norms affect the way we communicate across cultures. This includes an understanding of what is considered polite and unpolite in different cultures; 3) Communication barriers: Various factors that can interfere with effective communication between individuals from different cultural backgrounds, including language barriers, prejudices, stereotypes, and ethnosentrism. 4) Cultural adaptation: The process in which individuals adapt to other cultures as they interact. It involves learning and applying the norms, values, and behaviors that apply in those cultures. 5) Cultural codes: a system of symbols, languages, norms, and behaviors that are unique in a particular culture and that help its members communicate with each other. These codes can affect the way messages are delivered and received in cross-cultural communication. 6) Cultural Relativism and Universalism: Cultural relativism is the understanding that one set of values or ethics is not better than the other, whereas universalism assumes that there are certain values and norms that can be applied globally. 7) Intercultural Communication Skills: The ability to communicate effectively and politely with people from other cultures, which includes cultural awareness, cross-cultural empathy, and adaptability (Almashhadani, M., & Almashhadani, H. A. 2023; Patro, C. S. 2022).

Understanding these concepts is crucial in an increasingly global world, as it allows individuals and organizations to interact more effectively and sensitively to cultural differences.

Intercultural Communication Barriers

Intercultural communication barriers can occur when two or more people from different cultural backgrounds try to communicate with each other. This often leads to misunderstandings, conflict, and failure to convey the message in the intended way (Gašpar, M., Podrug, N., & Aleksić, A. 2023).

Some of the main barriers to cross-cultural communication are as follows: 1) Language: Language differences are the most obvious obstacles. Even when speaking in the same language, nuances, accents, slang, and idiomatic expressions from different regions or countries can lead to misunderstandings. 2) Non-Verbal Misinterpretation: Non-verbal communication such as body language, eye contact, facial expressions, and even silence, has different meanings across cultures. For example, while in some cultures eye contact is regarded as a form of openness and honesty, in other hearts can be considered rude or too brave. 3) Stereotypes and prejudices: A stereotype is an over-simplified idea or picture of a group that is often inaccurate or true to all its members. Prejudices and stereotypes can impede effective communication by affecting the way we perceive and respond to others. 4) Ethnocentrism: An attitude that equates its own cultural standards and norms as the best or most correct is ethnocentrism. It creates an obstacle when one cannot appreciate or realize the validity of other cultural

perspectives, values, and behaviour. 5) Time management: Time management varies significantly between different cultures. In some cultures, time is considered linear and timing accuracy is highly valued. In other cultures time is more flexible and the approach to delay can be more relaxed. 6) Context elevation: Cultures of high context and low context communicate in very different ways. Misunderstandings can occur when people from low-context cultures (who desire direct communication) try to communicate with people from high-contextual cultures (yang mengandalkan banyak komunikasi non-verbal dan konteksual). 7) Values and Social Norms: Each culture has its own system of values and social norms that govern behavior that is considered acceptable. 8) Tolerance for Uncertainty and Ambiguity: Reacting to uncertainties in different ways can create obstacles. In some cultures, uncertainty can be accepted and managed patiently, while in other cultures there may be a strong need for clarity, structure, and rules (Gašpar, M., Podrug, N., & Aleksić, A. 2023; Mogea, T. 2022).

Overcoming barriers to cross-cultural communication requires cultural awareness, increased knowledge, and the ability to see the world from the perspective of others, as well as the development of communication skills that are sensitive to cultural differences.

Strategies to Overcome Intercultural Communication Barriers

A communication strategy is a plan or approach that is systematically formulated to deliver a message or information to a target audience in the most effective and efficient way. The goal of a communication strategy is to the desired results, which can be behavioral change, awareness-raising, relationship-building, or the achievement of organizational or personal goals (Oluwaseyi, J. 2024). The choice of the right strategy depends on a variety of factors, including the characteristics of the audience, the purpose of communication, the message to be delivered, and the media or channels to be used. The effectiveness of a communication strategy can be measured by how well the results achieved align with the objectives set. (Mhlongo et al., 2024).

Communication strategy includes a variety of elements, such as: 1) Message preparation: Design clear, interesting, and relevant messages for the target audience. 2) Channel selection: Choosing the media or channel that is most suitable for reaching the audience, like social media, email, face-to-face meetings, press releases, or advertising campaigns. 3) Audience segmentation: Identifies and categorizes audiences into specific groups based on their characteristics or needs to improve the relevance and effectiveness of messages. 4) Communication Scheduling: Sets when and how often messages are delivered to maximize impact. 5) Evaluation and Adjustment: Measures the efficiency of strategies and makes adjustments based on feedback or results obtained. (Kappagomtula, C. L. 2017; Mogea, T. 2023).

Implementing a good communication strategy requires a deep understanding of context, analytical skills to understand situations and audiences, and creativity in designing and implementing communication.

In an era of globalization like this, the ability to communicate across cultures has become crucial. Barriers to cross-cultural communication can lead to misunderstandings and tensions in professional and personal relationships.

Here are strategies that can be used to overcome these barriers; 1) Increase Cultural Awareness, Include; a) Understand Differences and Similarities: Take time to learn and appreciate differences and intercultural similarities. It helps in developing empathy and deeper understanding, b) Learning about Other Cultures: Taking a course on culture or reading books and watching movies about other cultures enhances understanding and awareness. 2) Developing Language Skills, including; a) Learning New Languages: Language skills are the key to effective communication. Although it is not always possible to be fluent, learning the basics of the language can be very helpful, b) Use the Interpreter or Translator Service: When communication is important, using the translator service can be an effective option to ensure the message is delivered correctly. 3) Observe Non-Verbal Communication, including; a) Learn Non-verbal signals: Body language, eye contact, and facial expressions have different meanings in different cultures. Realizing these differences can reduce misunderstandings, b) Adapting Body Language: Trying to adjust body language and non-verbal expression to the culture of the communication partner. 4) Show Respect and Empathy, include; (a) Practice Openness and Patience: Have an open and patient attitude when interacting with individuals from different backgrounds creating a more comfortable atmosphere for communication; (b) Express Respect: Use polite phrases and show respect for other people's cultural norms and traditions. 5) Adaptation and flexibility, including; (a) Ready to Adjust: Be prepared to adjust your communication style and approach based on interaction and feedback, (b) Be flexible in unforeseen situations: Easy to adapt to unexpected situations and understand that differences may require a different approach. 6) Using Technology Effectively, Including; (a) Using Digital Tools: Using translation applications and online resources to enhance understanding and communication; (b) Social Media and Communication Platforms: Digital platforms can be a means of expanding knowledge about other cultures and interacting with people from all over the world. (Zegers, C., & Auron, M. 2022; Tiawati et al. 2024).

Overcoming the barriers to cross-cultural communication requires awareness, empathy, and dedication to learning and respecting differences. By implementing such strategies, individuals and organizations can strengthen cross-cultural relationships, which will ultimately contribute to richer personal experiences and professional success in a global context. With the right approach, cross-cultural communication can be an opportunity to learn and grow, not a barrier. (Lee, E. S., & Wechtler, H. 2024).

Conclusion

Overcoming the barriers to cross-cultural communication in a multinational environment requires a strategic approach and strong empathy for individual differences. Through awareness, education, the proper use of technology, and building strong interpersonal relationships, organizations can reduce misunderstandings and strengthen effective teamwork in the midst of cultural diversity. Thus, organizations not only increase productivity, but also encourage innovation and creativity resulting from a wealth of diverse perspectives.

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