



Communication: From Multicultural Team Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Global business environment made multicultural teams as an essential part of the working environment. People from various backgrounds including different culture, language, social status and different countries work together are commonly seen. Internationally grown multinational industries are increasing rapidly. This change brought a variety of opportunities and challenges to the business environment. Global business environment mainly relies on good communication, that lead success of any business. Effective communication lays a bridge between different people involved in the business, connecting various cultural and organizational backgrounds. Poor communication in a multicultural environment creates poor relationships between employees and unfriendly work atmosphere which may lead to failure of an organization. Difficulties in communication among multicultural team have been examined through a random sampling technique from various participants who belongs to a multicultural working team through email. The result shows that poor communication is a major problem of any organization. Common modes communications were phone, email and face to face communication. Phone and email were identified as a problematic mode. Also nonverbal and pictorial representation is problematic style of communication. Effective listening, use of official format, common language, common communicator and language translator application are the factors that help better communication process.

KEYWORDS : global business environment, language, communication, culture

INTRODUCTION

The world has become a global village now. It is very common to see people involved in a business environment are from different backgrounds and locations. This diversity may lead to poor communication as culture does have an impact on the behavior of individuals. Conflicts will result in loss of productive employee time. Diverse work groups experience strong conflicts (Pelled, 1999), communication between group members becomes more difficult (Ancona and Caldwell, 1992), the willingness to cooperate with fellow group members diminishes (Thomas, 1999) and group cohesion decreases (Harrison, 2002). All these process losses often result in higher turnover and absenteeism rates (O'Reilly, 1989) and lower the work satisfactorily (Tsuji, 1992).

Different cultured people have their own way of interpreting languages and signs. For example normal way of reading around the world is from left to right, whereas people from few countries like Saudi Arabia and Japan are having reading habit from right to left. Cultural values are learned very early life as people are socialized into their respective environments within particular societies and are very difficult to relearn or change (Hofstede, 2001).

Effective proper communication will resolve conflicts or avoid conflicts. Most employee disputes can be dealt with early or avoided through proper positive communication. Effective listening is the main solution of any communication problem. Listening will improve good communication knowledge. People should develop their communication skills in order to work more effectively. Clear, timely and effective communication is the proper way of communication. The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and a lightning bug (Mark Twain, 1890).

Few examples related to communication mistakes in global markets:-

A razor company had been using the brand name "TIZ" which means sharp in Iran. This brand name had enjoyed good customer acceptance in Iran with its sharp image. In mid 1980's when they used the same brand name in Qatar market, it created serious problems as "TIZ" had a connotation in Arabic slang referred to "Buttocks" (Tevfik, 1996).

Baby food manufacturer "Gerber" had a problem in France as "Gerber" can be translated from French as "To Vomit". The soft drinks Fresco

in Mexico had a serious problem. The sales people were embarrassed as fresco is slang for "lesbian". When Pepsico advertised Pepsi in Taiwan with the advertisement "Come alive with Pepsi" they had no idea that it would be translated into Chinese as "Pepsi brings your ancestors back from the dead". Coors (Beer Company) put its slogan "Turn It Loose" into Spanish, where its translation was read as 'suffer from diarrhea'.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Communication is the process of transmitting meanings from sender to receiver. On the surface, this appears to be a fairly straight forward process. There are several problems in the international scenario that can result in the failure to transfer meanings correctly. Mistakes in cross cultural communication often go unnoticed by the communicators, but these mistakes have the potential to cause damage to international relationships and negotiations. Mistakes and misinterpretations of subtle gestures of the hands and face, the use of silence, what is said or not said, and the intricacies of dealing with age and status often provide pitfalls for international managers (Aswathappa, 2008).

Crucial issues in multicultural communications are: languages and culture, the differences between high and low context cultures, use of interpreters and nonverbal communication. If these are taken care of intercultural communication will be effective (Aswathappa, 2008).

People tend to assume that the challenges on multicultural teams arise from differing styles of communication. But this is only one of the four categories that can create barriers to a team's ultimate success. These categories are direct versus indirect communication; trouble with accents and fluency; differing attitudes toward hierarchy and authority; and conflicting norms for decision making (Jeanne.et.al, 2006)

Successful international management requires effective cross cultural communication. Additionally, global business, activities such as leading, motivating, decision making, problem solving and exchanging information and ideas depend on the ability of managers and employees from one culture, to communicate successfully with colleagues, clients and suppliers from other culture (Aswathappa, 2008).

The organizations which employ us and the business which depend on our skills now recognize that communication is at the center of what it means to be successful (O'Rourke, 2005).

METHODOLOGY

The population was chosen based on respondents who had experience in multicultural working environment. Sample size of 54 has been chosen from IT sector using random sampling method. Samples have been selected from both off shore and onshore experienced group. The research questions were formulated and drawn from previous presented theories and conclusions about multicultural teams (See Anne Susann, 2006). An e-mail questionnaire has been created and sent to the participants.

DATA ANALYSIS

Selected variables for the analysis were poor communication is a problem of any organization, mode of communication, problematic mode of communication, preferred mode of communication, problematic style of communication, factors help to improve the communication process and impact of translator applications in communication problems. To analysis data descriptive statistic analysis for the frequencies, multiple response analysis for the frequencies and correlation analysis for relationship between variables were done using SPSS.

RQ1. Poor communication is problem of any organization

The questions to the multicultural team opinions included whether respondents feel poor communication is a problem of any organization. It was observed from the analysis that poor communication is a problem of any organization.

Table 4.1
Poor Communication is a problem of any organisation

Poor Communication is a problem		Percentage (%)
Valid	Strongly Agree	65.4
	Agree	30.8
	Strongly Disagree	3.8
	Total	100.0

Table 4.1 reveals that 65.4 % of the respondents “strongly agree” and 30.8 % of respondents “agree” that poor communication is a problem of any organization. “Strongly agree” and “agree” implies that poor communication is the problem of any organization. This conclusion is in line with the previous study that the impact of gap in communication will lower the customer’s confidence and overall, it will impact growth” (Archana, 2012).

RQ2. Mode of Communication

The mode of communication used is listed and asked them to answer whichever is used by them. The modes of communication listed were phones, Emails and face to face communication.

Table 4.2
Modes of communication

Mode of Communication	Percentage (%)
Phone	61.5
Email	88.5
FTF	82.7

From the table 4.2 it is understood that 61.5% uses phone, 88.5% used email and 82.7% used face to face communication. It is concluded from the table that Email and Face to face communication are used more than phone communication.

RQ3. Preferred mode of communication

Respondents were asked to list out their preference of mode of communication among phone, E-mails and face to face communication.

Table 4.3
Preferred mode of communication

Preferred Mode	Percentage (%)
Phone	21.9
Email	24.7
FTF	53.4
Total	100.0

From the table 4.3 it is very clear that face to face communication (53.4%) is preferred most, phone (21.9%) and Email (24.7%) preferred less. Email lacks cues like facial expression and tone of voice. That makes it difficult for recipients to decode meaning well (Morris and Lowenstein, 2006).

RQ4. Problematic Mode of Communication

The respondents were asked to answer, which mode of communication is a problematic among Phone, Email and Face to face communication.

Table 4.4
Problematic Mode of Communication

Problematic Mode	Percentage
Phone	43.5
Email	50.7
FTF	5.8
Total	100

The table 4.4 reveals that most problematic mode of communication is Email (50.7%) where as phone (43.5 %) is the problematic mode next to Email. 5.8 % of face to face communication indicates that it is less problematic mode of communication. Eliminating face-to-face meetings as an option in communicating with employees would be a mistake (Richard 2009).

RQ5. Problematic style

The respondents were asked to answer, which style of communication is a problematic among verbal communication, non-verbal communication and pictorial representation.

Table 4.5
Problematic style

Problematic Style	Percent of Cases
Verbal	18.3%
Nonverbal	51.2%
Pictorial	30.5%
Total	100.0%

From the table 4.5 it is understood that Nonverbal (51.2%) style of communication is the most problematic style of communication where as pictorial representation (30.5%) is problematic next to Nonverbal communication style. Verbal communication (18.3%) is less problematic style. Misunderstandings become more likely when we fail to understand that persons around the world and from different co cultures use nonverbal cues that adhere to cultural rules that are different from ours (Gamble, 2013).

RQ6. Factors that help to improve Communication Process

Factors including effective listening will improve better communication process, use of official format will improve better communication process, need of a common language for a better communication process and common communicator (mediating Person) for better communication process were measured using Likert scale.

Table 4.6
Effective Listening

Effective listening	Valid Percent
SA	84.6
A	15.4
Total	100.0

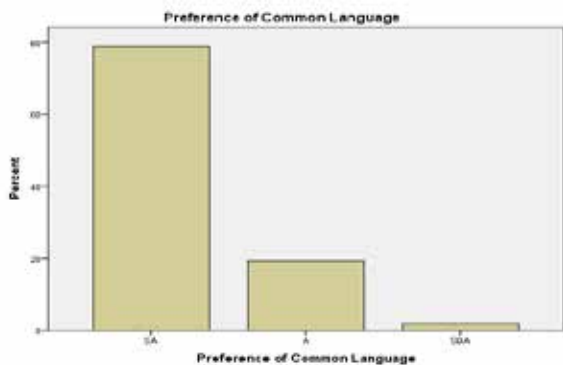
Table 4.6 shows that the entire respondents agreed that effective listening will improve the communication process by answering strongly agreed (84.6%) and agreed (15.4%). Active listeners raise questions; clarify ambiguous declaration, and takes great pains to insure that they and their counterpart have the same understanding of what has been said (Robert and Ezequiel 2001).

Table 4.7
Official format

Official format	Valid Percent	
Valid	SA	67.3
	A	28.8
	DA	3.8
	Total	100.0

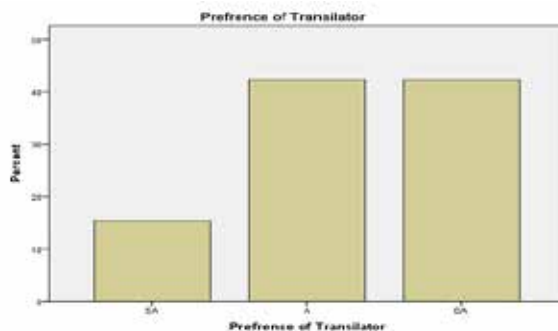
From the Table 4.7 it is understood that 67.3% “strongly agreed” and 28.8% “agreed” for having official format for better communication process. If there is no communication plan in the company, it must be created and it must follow strategic plan in the company because it is not possible to reach strategic goals of a company without good internal communication (Kenan, 2011).

Chart 4.1
Preference of Common Language



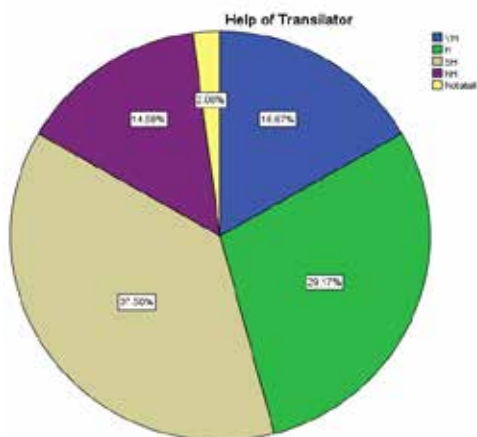
The respondents were asked whether they prefer to have a common language for communication. From the Chart 4.1 78.8% “strongly agreed” and 19.2 % “agreed” shows that they preferred to have common language. Only 1.9% of the respondents strongly disagreed. It is here that the adoption of a single lingua franca is most in evidence, both in lecture rooms and board rooms, as well as in thousands of individual contacts being made daily all over the globe (David, 2003).

Chart 4.2



From the chart 4.2 15.4% “strongly agree” and 42.3% “agree” shows that respondents prefer to have translator applications like Google translator, but 42.3% “disagree” indicates that they are not interested to have translators. Although Google translator’s performance is never likely to reach the level of an expert human’s, it can provide quick, cheap translations for unusual language pairs (Milam and Shilpa 2011).

Chart4.3
Help of Translators



From the chart 4.3 it is under stood that 16.7% “very helpful” 29.2% “helpful” and 37.5% “somewhat helpful” reveals that translators are helping in translation of different language and improvement in these translators will create a revolution in communication process. Although *Google Translate* provides translations among a large number of languages, the accuracies vary greatly. This study gives for the first time an estimate of how good a potential translation might be using the software. Our analysis shows that translations between European languages are usually good, while those involving Asian languages are often relatively poor (Milam and Shilpa 2011).

CONCLUSION

The research findings show that poor communication is a major problem of any organization. Common modes communications were phone, email and face to face communication. Phone and email were identified as a problematic mode. Also nonverbal and pictorial representation is problematic style of communication. Eeffective listening, use of official format, common language, common communicator and language translator application are the variables which help to communicate in better way.

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