

Cross-Culture Communication

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INTRODUCTION

In this millennium, global organizations will increasingly focus on the critical value of the cross-cultural communication process, efficiency, competence and its cost of doing business. In order to successfully communicate cross-culturally, knowledge and understanding of cultural factors such as values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviors should be acquired. Because culture is a powerful force that strongly influences communication behavior, culture and communication are inseparably linked.

Worldwide, in 1983-2003, countries have experienced a phenomenal growth in international trade and foreign direct investment. Similarly, they have discovered the importance of cross-cultural communication. As a result, practitioners and scholars are paying attention to the fact that cultural dimensions influence management practices (Adler, 1983; Child, 1981; Hofstede, 1980; Laurent, 1983; Maruyama, 1984; Triandis, 1982-1983). In recent years, the empirical work in the cross-cultural arena has focused on the role of culture on employee behavior in communicating within business organizations (Tayeh, 1988). But current work on cross-cultural business communication has paid little attention to either (a) how to adapt these seminal works on general communication to the needs of intercultural business or (b) how to create new models more relevant to cross-cultural business exchanges (Limaye, 1991, p. 283). So far there is no adequate model that can explain the cross-cultural communication process and efficiency, let alone estimate the cost of doing business with other cultures worldwide.

The purpose of this article is to define the framework for a cross-cultural asymmetric communication process, efficiency and cost of doing business in the global economy. The research method is based on the architectural design of a cross-cultural communication process and system and their quantitative analysis. Their attributes are estimated in a normative way on a scale from 1 to 5, when 5 is the best value. The attributes for two selected cultures (Western-West and Egyptian) are estimated by expert opinions.

BACKGROUND

A Concept of Culture

A culture is a value-guided, continuous process of developing patterned human behavior within and across cultures and civilizations. Cultures do not satisfy needs; rather, they demand values. In turn, values in their broadest sense define the member of any culture's need for rationality, meaningfulness in emotional experience, richness of imagination and depth of faith (Laszlo, 1972). Human communication, therefore, is a vehicle for cultural dissemination on the one hand, while on the other hand is itself culture-driven.

Cultures are components of a civilization that guide their behavioral patterns. For example, Western civilization currently is composed of the following cultures:

- The Western-West, containing Western Europe and Northern America
- The Western Central, embracing Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Croatia, and Slovene
- The Western-East, containing Greece and Israel
- The Western-Latin, composed of Latin America's states

There is some opinion that after the end of the Cold War in 1989/1991, that world politics is entering a new phase, and intellectuals have not hesitated to proliferate a vision of what it will be - the end of history (Fukuyama, 1989) or the clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1993). Huntington (1993) predicts that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. He perceives that the great divisions among humankind and their dominating source of conflict will be cultural.

THE CROSS-CULTURE COMMUNICATIONS PROCESS

We assume that doing business in the global economy depends mostly on the partners' ability to successfully communicate in a cross-cultural environment. People pursue and communicate many common aims, including the values of pure biological survival, social collaboration, creative expression, organizational adaptability or business undertakings. From such common values one can form a hierarchy of human cultural layers:

1. Biological culture layer
2. Personal culture layer
3. Group culture layer
4. Organization culture layer (ex. business enterprise)
5. Regional culture layer
6. National culture layer
7. Global culture layer (including supra-national, regional ones)

Those layers of cultures and the communication climate associated with them filter messages and intentions of business partners and determine the success of business undertakings. A model of the cross-cultural communication process is shown in Figure 1 (Targowski & Bowman, 1988).

The model of the cross-culture communication process takes place at least between two partners who, in order to communicate, must send both a message and their intentions through several layers of cultures. For example, to communicate in the global economy between two different cultures each partner filters a message and intentions through seven layers of culture (biological, personal, group, organization, regional, national, and global).

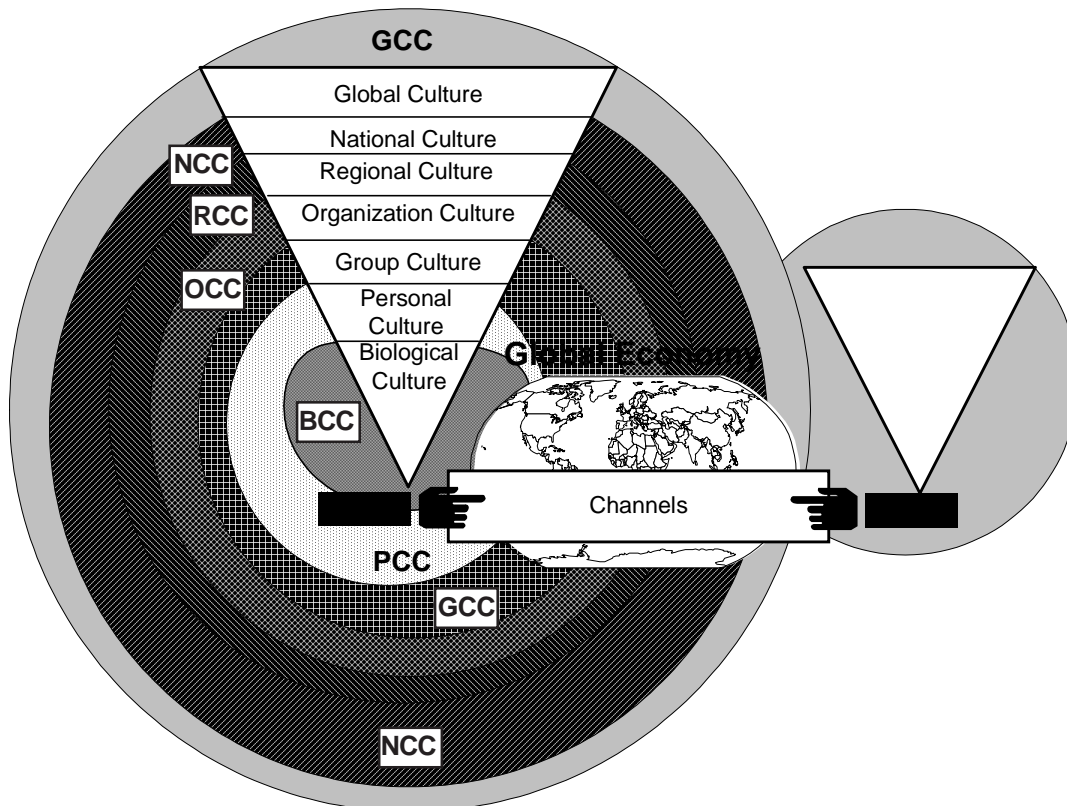
Of course, to be successful, such cross-culture communication must be based upon a good understanding of rules and practices that govern each layer of culture.

Let's define components of the cross-culture communication process in the global economy.

A). Global Economy

The global economy is largely understood in terms of worldwide economic and political convergence around liberal market principles and the increasing real-time integration of business, technological and financial systems (World Bank, 1997). The globalization process is supported by electronic communication that makes geography, borders, and time zones irrelevant to the way we

Figure 1. The culture layers and communication climates in the cross-culture communication process



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