

## COMPONENTS OF INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

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### Abstract

This article examines how intercultural communication competence is needed in real life situations and provides clear information about the key components of intercultural communication competence. For the analysis of the matter the author provides a real life case study and analyses for each of which the theoretical underpinning will be explained and examples provided. The article will conclude with an extended reflective section examining some of the limits of the project, areas in which it could be further developed or adapted to context, finishing with an indication of areas in which further research is needed.

**Keywords:** intercultural Communication, intercultural competence, translation, motivation, components of intercultural communication competence, self- and other knowledge, and tolerance for uncertainty

### Аннотация

В этой статье рассматривается, как компетентность в области межкультурной коммуникации необходима в реальных жизненных ситуациях, и предоставляется четкая информация о ключевых компонентах компетентности в области межкультурной коммуникации. Для анализа этого вопроса автор предоставляет исследование из реальной жизни и анализы, для каждого из которых будет объяснено теоретическое обоснование и приведены примеры. Статья завершится расширенным разделом для размышлений, в котором будут рассмотрены некоторые ограничения проекта, области, в которых его можно было бы доработать или адаптировать к контексту, а также будут указаны области, в которых необходимы дальнейшие исследования.

**Ключевые слова:** межкультурная коммуникация, межкультурная компетентность, перевод, мотивация, компоненты межкультурной коммуникативной компетенции, само- и чужое знание, толерантность к неопределенности.

### Introduction

Intercultural competence of interpreters / translators and ways of its advancement has been tended to by numerous researchers from diverse focuses of view. Nevertheless, nearly all studies claim that a special course or experience is needed to foster development of intercultural communication competence. intercultural competence refers to ‘the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioural orientations to the world’ (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 7). Barrett et al. (2013) extend this definition by arguing that intercultural

competence is a combination of attitudes, knowledge, understanding and skills applied in intercultural encounters. Intercultural competence allows intercultural communicators to understand and respect individuals they perceive to have different cultural affiliations; to respond appropriately, effectively and respectfully when interacting and communicating with such individuals; to establish positive and constructive relationships with such people; to understand themselves and their own multiple cultural affiliations through encounters with cultural 'difference' (Barrett et al., 2013). One of the reasons why intercultural competence is important in an increasing globalised and diverse society, is the fact an interculturally competent person will have key skills that employers look for in potential staff.

### Components of Intercultural Communication Competence

Intercultural communication competence (ICC) is the ability to communicate effectively as well as properly in different cultural contexts. Scientists claim that there are a number of components of ICC. Among them some main components include motivation, self- and other knowledge, and tolerance for uncertainty.

Actually, an individual's motivation for communicating with other people from different cultures must be considered. Motivation refers to the initial root of a person's desire to develop intercultural relationships and can be intrinsic or extrinsic (Martin & Nakayama, 2010). In <sup>1</sup>*Communication in the Real World: An Introduction to Communication Studies*, types of motivation that creates intercultural communication competence are clearly explained. Put simply, if a person has no motivation to communicate with other people from another culture, then the components of ICC don't actually matter. However, if a person has a healthy curiosity or other interests or reasons that drive him or her toward intercultural communications in order to learn more about self and others, then there is a foundation from which to build additional competence-relevant attitudes and skills. This intrinsic motivation creates intercultural communication process a more voluntary, rewarding, and lifelong learning process. At the same time Motivation can also be extrinsic, which means that the desire for intercultural communication is accomplished by an outside reward like money, power, or recognition. While both types of motivation can contribute to ICC, context may further enhance or impede a person's motivation to communicate across cultures. It can be often observed that some people perform better in uncertain situations than others, and intercultural encounters often bring up uncertainty. Margaret D. Pusch ( *The Interculturally Competent Global Leader,* " in *The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence*, ed. Darla K. Deardorff (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009), 69.) writes that depending on communicating with someone of a different gender, race, or nationality, people usually wonder what they should or shouldn't do or say. Uncertain situations most often become clearer as they progress, but the anxiety that an individual with a low tolerance for uncertainty feels may lead them to leave the situation or otherwise communicate in a less competent manner. Individuals who have a high tolerance for uncertainty may show more patience, waiting on new

<sup>1</sup> Communication in the Real World: An Introduction to Communication Studies is adapted from a work produced and distributed under a Creative Commons license (CC BY-NC-SA) in 2013 by a publisher who has requested that they and the original author not receive attribution. This adapted edition is produced by the University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing through the eLearning Support Initiative.

information to become available or seeking out information, which may then increase the understanding of the situation and lead to a more successful result in the end. Individuals who are intrinsically motivated toward intercultural communication usually have a higher tolerance for uncertainty, in that their curiosity leads them to engage with others who are different because they find the self- and other-knowledge gained rewarding. Knowledge contributes to motivation and it is an important part of building intercultural communication competence. Knowledge can be self- and other-awareness, mindfulness, and cognitive flexibility. Building knowledge of our own cultures, identities, and communication patterns takes more than passive experience. Building knowledge of our own cultures, identities, and communication patterns takes more time than passive experience. Judith N. Martin and Thomas K. Nakayama (Intercultural Communication in Contexts, 5th ed. 2010, 468) write that we learn our identity through our interactions with others. Developing cultural self-awareness often requires people to get out of their comfort zones. Listening to different people is a key component of developing self-knowledge. This may be sometimes uncomfortable, because we may realize that people think of our identities differently than we thought.

### Methodology

The components of intercultural communication competence is analysed by studying a case study in some sort of context with the following case study which is based on a real-life incident. The author clearly summarizes the components with the examples and reason of the character that had the story in her real life.

Case study on components of intercultural competence

<sup>2</sup>“Maryanne is from the USA. She is a business process leader for a global telecommunications company. She is new to her role and has recently arrived in Shanghai to meet one of the Chinese managers and explore their business setup.

She struggles to understand the rationale behind team reporting lines in the Chinese office and spends lots of time asking detailed questions to establish the underlying reasoning. The Chinese manager smiles and answers the questions, but Maryanne perceives his responses to be evasive. She decides to park the issue and connect with the more senior China country manager for an explanation on her return to the USA. However, once home, she is confronted by her angry boss who explains that her visit did not go down well. They had a call from the China country manager to inform them that the Chinese manager had considered her conduct to be rude, insulting and brash. Despite Maryanne feeling that she had behaved correctly, the incident has created considerable upset in China”

### Results and Discussion

#### What does intercultural communication competence mean?

As it can be observed clearly in the story above of Maryanne, she didn't quite have much experience, know-how or support to navigate her first encounter with Chinese business culture. Surely with time and practice, this will change until she is more than competent in adapting her approach to the situation, context and culture.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.commisceo-global.com/blog/what-is-intercultural-communication-competence>

Intercultural communication competence means Maryanne will next time be able to ask questions in a more gentle way, to think carefully about outcomes and walk the tightrope between being effective and polite.

Professionals as well as translators who are competent in communicating across cultures tend to share the following key qualities:

- They appreciate that every individual is shaped by their own unique blend of cultures (national, regional, professional, familial, etc.) and that other factors such as geographies, histories and economic experiences all influence communication styles.
- They understand the connection between value systems, culture and communication preferences and how these manifest in different contexts/channels of communication.
- They acknowledge the impact of bias on the way we communicate with others and the role of power differences in framing communication goals.
- They have an understanding of generic models to adapt to various communication styles of people from other cultures.
- They adapt their own style as necessary to get the best out of their interaction.

## CONCLUSIONS

Considering all the components of intercultural communication competence we can observe the problems that the case study shows. First of all, Maryanne is from a culture that adopts a much more direct communication style, especially in the professional setting. In the USA, saying things 'as they are', albeit diplomatically, is seen as being upfront, transparent and economical with time, therefore becoming the preferred approach to communication. With restricted involvement of working with the Chinese, Maryanne wasn't mindful that the Chinese communication fashion can be very distinctive, particularly within the proficient context. Chinese culture tends to put awesome esteem on concordance, progression and 'face'. These are communicated through their selection of a more backhanded communication fashion, where people tend to take care almost securing others' sentiments and making beyond any doubt that showdown is minimised. Unfortunately for Maryanne, she had small worldwide encounter and needed an appreciation of communication contrasts around the world. This implied she did not have the competence (the capacity to do something effectively or productively) to communicate over cultures. The complaint around Maryanne basically came down to her not situating her addressing in a more socially fitting way. Her or maybe coordinate approach came over severely within the Chinese setting as a full-on challenge. Be that as it may, for the Chinese, they can't fair come out and say this so they tend to provide political answers. These were at that point misconstrued by Maryanne as being sly since to her ears they were not replying the questions she was asking. It's a basic case consider but a great illustration of why competence in intercultural communication is vital; not as it were for the commerce world but moreover in regions like legislative issues, healthcare, open administrations and numerous other ranges of life.