

Crosscultural Communication and Cultural Awareness

Dr. Greg Bond, June 2020

Working in Georgia as a trainer

Working in Georgia as a trainer – learning

time and schedules

long and short-term planning

ambiguity and uncertainty

linear and non-linear approaches to tasks and communication

flexibility and trust

know and reflect on your own expectations

Group work

1. Read each scenario out loud and then discuss these questions.

- 1. What is your immediate personal gut reaction. Do you feel any particular empathy or solidarity for one position? Can you understand the people? How would you react in this situation? How would you feel and what would you do?
- 2. Do you think something like this would happen in your culture / society / company? Would it be “normal” behaviour?
- 3. How would you explain the behaviour of the people in these stories? If the behaviour is culturally shaped, what are the underlying cultural values?

1. A man from A, who is around 50 and has two grown-up children, has taken a guest / lodger in his home, a young woman from B, the same age as his children. She has come to A as a refugee and is very grateful. The relationship is good, and one day the woman from B writes a thank-you letter to the man from A and his wife, which is very touching. The man from A wants to embrace the young woman from B, but he is uncertain and decides not to.

Knowing when (and how) to touch?

Proxemics is the use of space and it is subject to cultural norms

We can talk of public space, social space, personal space, intimate space

Do what degree do smells (olfactory norms), gestures, body language play a role in our cultures?





2. A group of academics from A was meeting for a Friday afternoon seminar. A paper was presented and then there was a heated discussion. A foreign guest professor was disturbed by the atmosphere and had the impression that the professors did not like each other at all. She was surprised that after the discussion had ended they left the room in a good mood and wished each other a nice weekend. She decided that she did not want to work with these people.

Task and Relationship

Where is the primary focus? On the task – the problem – or the people?

Or: put another way – does the relationship work well when people are direct and straightforward, or does it work well when people are discreet and use polite forms of communication?

What kind of relationship is expected?

How are differences of opinion and conflicts communicated?

**Kein Verkauf
von Kleineis
möglich !**

How do I think he/she
will feel when I say that?

that way

Is that how I want
her/him to feel?

Rucksack -
verbot

A TEACHER'S PRAYER

I WANT TO TEACH MY STUDENTS MORE THAN
LESSONS IN A BOOK;

I WANT TO TEACH THEM DEEPER THINGS THAT
PEOPLE OVERLOOK;

THE VALUE OF A ROSE IN BLOOM, ITS USE AND
BEAUTY TOO;

A SENSE OF CURIOSITY TO DISCOVER WHAT IS
TRUE;

HOW TO THINK AND HOW TO CHOOSE THE
RIGHT ABOVE THE WRONG,

HOW TO LIVE AND LEARN EACH DAY AND GROW
UP TO BE STRONG;

TO TEACH THEM ALWAYS HOW TO GAIN IN
WISDOM AND IN GRACE,

SO THEY WILL SOMEDAY MAKE THE WORLD A
BRIGHTER, BETTER PLACE.

LORD, LET ME BE A FRIEND AND GUIDE

TO GIVE THESE MINDS A START;

UPON THEIR WAY DOWN LIFE'S LONG ROAD,

THEN I'LL HAVE DONE MY PART.

THIS IS WHAT ALL TEACHERS PRAY.

3. A woman from A is a successful freelance trainer, training mediation to lawyers, and has established a leading business in a small market in her country. She is called up one day by the country's chief justice, who she first met when she was a student of law, as he was a professor of law at the time. The chief justice asks her if she can provide a series of one-day trainings for young judges, who really need to know more about what mediation is and how it can work. She feels honoured, but there is no discussion about money, and the woman knows that she cannot ask the chief justice for money for this.

Particularism and Universalism

Is there one rule for everyone?

Or are procedures and arrangements pragmatic and relative?

Is it about making rules and procedures clear and transparent?

Or is it about flexibility and case-by-case decisions?



4. You come from society A and are working in society B. At business meetings you find it confusing that there is no set seating arrangement and the boss just sits in with the rest. Everyone is dressed in the same informal way. At business dinners it is the same – everyone just sits at the table wherever they like. The boss has no particular role at dinner, such as asking everyone to begin, holding a speech, etc.

Power Distance

All cultures must deal with the issue of human inequality.

Power distance as “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” (Hofstede).

Power distance can be seen in families, in bureaucracies and even in friendships. It is expressed in how we communicate, how we organize space, and how decisions are made, etc.



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5. In families children and young adults (who are still children) do what their parents wish or at least approve of. They are supported by their families, but the expectations are strong and shared by all that the parents have a strong say in what the children do until they themselves get married. If for example, the family comes from a social class where it is expected that the children go to university and get a degree – perhaps in law – then this is what the children will do. The parents will expect and support this.

Collectivism and Individualism

Are people expected to make their own decisions, based on their own preferences and needs, independent of a larger group (family, work group, society)?

Are people expected to be motivated by the norms and expectations of a larger group and to emphasise the connections they have to others when they make decisions?





**YOUR COUNTRY
WILL SALUTE
IF YOU
DON'T POLLUTE**

6. A company from A is running a construction project in B. The project is behind schedule, and the two senior project managers from A are frustrated because they cannot speak directly to the workers due to the language barrier. The work is not done to the quality that the managers from A expect, and many tasks have to be repeated and corrected, as the workers from B are making too many mistakes. When the managers from A talk to their partner project managers from B, in English (which is not the native language of any of them), the partners from B agree that the schedule and quality are important, but in the next days nothing seems to change to the managers from A.

Face

There is self-face, mutual-face, and other-face.

How people communicate and negotiate and what levels of assertion they display can be related to face.

This also relates to conflict behaviours.



Discussion

- Which cultural norms and expectations are part of yourself, and how might you need to reflect on them?
- How do variable cultural norms and expectations influence how conflict is dealt with?
 - A) in informal settings
 - B) in more formal settings such as mediation / arbitration / litigation
- What is the greatest personal skill you can develop in crosscultural communication?

Sources and Literature

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