

## **CHAPTER 1 *Introduction to Intercultural Competence***

### **CHAPTER OBJECTIVES**

- (1) To introduce the five imperatives for intercultural competence: the demographic imperative, the technological imperative, the economic imperative, the peace imperative, and the interpersonal imperative.
- (2) To emphasize the importance of competent intercultural communication skills in the United States and the world.
- (3) To introduce the topic of communication.
- (4) To provide a definition and characteristics of communication.
- (5) To underscore the challenge of communicating in an intercultural world.

### **LECTURE LAUNCHERS**

1. Ask students to take out a sheet of paper and write the following words on the board: White, Black or African American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander. Ask the students to write down what percentage of the United States of America's population falls under each area. Once students have had a chance to write down their guesses, share the actual statistics with them (visit the U.S. Census to for the actual numbers <http://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-02.pdf>). Were they close? Why or why not? Everything from personal experiences (or lack thereof) with people who are different from them to relying on mass media messages can influence their guesses.
2. You may complete a similar version of the activity by introducing Hispanic or Latino as a category. How does that alter student guesses...and why weren't they included in the first set of categories? The previous link provides information on how this category is handled for the census and the different races Hispanic or Latinos report.
3. What does it mean to be competent? Have students suggest professions—doctor, lawyer, waiter, etc.—and write them on the board. Ask students to generate a definition of competence that applies to all the professions. Just because a lawyer or waiter tries doesn't mean they're competent. What makes a good doctor a good doctor? That they have a medical degree or can help people? (Remember, even medical schools have to have someone finish last in the class!) Discussion should generate some interesting ideas; identify common threads and then introduce the idea of a competent communicator.

### **CHAPTER OUTLINE**

- I. The Imperative for Intercultural Competence
  - A. The demographic imperative for intercultural competence

1. The U.S. is experiencing an extensive wave of cultural mixing.
  - a. The European American population is fast becoming the minority.
  - b. U.S. population shift is due largely to immigration and migration.
  - c. The “browning of America” is affecting demographics of K-12 classrooms, universities, and business settings.
2. Throughout Europe, Asia, Africa, South America, and the Middle East, there is an increasing pattern of cross-border movements that is both changing the distribution of people around the globe and intensifying the political and social tensions that accompany such population shifts.

B. The technological imperative for intercultural competence

1. Marshall McLuhan coined the term global village to describe the consequences of the mass media’s ability to bring events from the far reaches of the globe into people’s homes, thus shrinking the world.
2. Information technologies make intercultural links more prevalent.
  - a. Today the “global village” is an image that is used to describe the worldwide web of interconnections that modern technologies have created.
  - b. Communications such as the Internet, communication satellites, and cell phones make it possible to establish instantaneous links to people thousands of miles away.
  - c. Because of modern information technologies, many world events are experienced almost instantaneously and are no longer separated from us in time and space.
3. Rapid and efficient long-distance transportation systems link people who live very far from each other.
  - a. Modern transportation systems allow people to travel faster and more often than ever before.
  - b. Modern transportation has made commonplace the movement of people from one country and culture to another.
  - c. Nearly 64 million U.S. residents travel abroad annually.
4. Technology allows and facilitates human interactions across the globe and in real time.
  - a. According to Thomas Friedman, the “world is flat” because the convergence of technologies is creating an unprecedented degree of global competitiveness based on equal opportunities and access to the marketplace
  - b. Internet-based social networking sites such as Facebook, Baidu, LinkedIn, and Google+, as well as such technological innovations as Skype, Twitter, Chat, and Yahoo Messenger, are used by an extraordinarily large number of people to connect with others whom they may have never met—and perhaps will never meet—in face-to-face interactions.

C. The economic imperative for intercultural competence

1. Globalization—the integration of capital, technology, and information across national borders—is creating a global marketplace.
2. The economic success of the U.S. depends on intercultural communication competence.
3. The U.S. economy is characterized by interdependence with other countries.
4. The workplace is increasingly diverse culturally.

D. The peace imperative for intercultural competence

1. The need to understand and appreciate those who differ from ourselves is vital.
2. Frequent incidents of hate crimes and other animosities underscore the importance of the peace imperative.

E. The interpersonal imperative for intercultural competence

1. Given the effects of the global village, the quality of your daily life will increasingly depend upon your ability to communicate competently with people from other cultures.
2. There are consequences to maintaining competent interpersonal relationships in an intercultural world.
  - a. Doubt about others' expectations will be introduced and will reduce the certainty that specific behaviors, routines, and rituals mean the same things to everyone.
  - b. Cultural mixing implies that people will not always feel completely comfortable as they attempt to communicate in another language or as they try to talk with individuals who are not proficient in theirs.
  - c. Their sense of "rights" and "wrongs" will be threatened when challenged by the actions of those with an alternative cultural framework.
  - d. Many people will need to live in two or more cultures concurrently, shifting from one to another depending on the context.
  - e. Tensions inherent in creating intercultural communities will arise.

II. Defining Communication

A. Communication is a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people create shared meanings.

B. There are 6 characteristics of communication.

1. Communication is *symbolic*.
  - a. A *symbol* is a word, action, or object that stands for or represents a unit of meaning.
    1. *Meaning* is a perception, thought, or feeling that a person experiences and might want to communicate to others.
      - a. The private meanings within a person cannot be shared directly with others.
      - b. They can become shared and understood only when they are interpreted as a message.

2. A *message* refers to the “package” of symbols used to create shared meanings.
    - a. Symbols vary in their degree of arbitrariness.
2. Communication is *interpretive*.
  - a. Whenever people communicate, they must interpret the symbolic behavior of others and assign meaning to the behaviors.
    1. Each person in a communication transaction may not necessarily interpret the messages exactly in the same way.
    2. Messages do not have to be consciously or purposefully created for others to be able to make sense of them.
  - b. Communication requires *understanding* sufficient to accomplish the purposes of the participants.
    1. Understanding means that the participants have imposed similar or shared interpretations about what the messages actually mean.
    2. Without some degree of understanding between participants, it would be inaccurate to claim that communication has even occurred.
  - c. Communication does not require *agreement* among the participants.
    1. Just because you don’t agree with someone doesn’t mean you don’t understand her or him.
    2. It is possible, and often quite likely, that people will understand one another’s positions or ideas yet not agree with them.
3. Communication is *transactional*.
  - a. A transactional view holds that communicators are simultaneously sending and receiving messages at every instant that they are involved in conversations.
  - b. Earlier views of communication include the following.
    1. *Actional* views hold that communication is a linear, one-way flow of ideas.
      - a. The focus of this view was primarily on information transmission, or what the sender should do to structure a message that would achieve a desired result.
    - b. Actional views are not very useful in the study of intercultural communication.
      1. The underlying assumption of the actional view is that the sender’s goal is to persuade the receiver.

2. Actional views of communication assume that the receivers of messages are somehow inferior to the senders, with little involvement or influence on the communication process.
3. The actional view emphasizes the transmission of a message.
4. Limitations of the actional view lead to the development of the *interactional view*.

2. *Interactional* views hold that senders should adapt persuasive messages to their receivers.

- a. The interactional view emphasizes interpretation by explicitly including the receiver in the communication process.
- b. It recognizes that the receivers provide the senders with ongoing responses, called *feedback*, about how the messages are received.
- c. In this view, senders need to adapt their messages to the changing perceptions of receivers in order to be effective in persuading them.
- d. Limitations of the interactional view make it of little use to the study of intercultural communication.

1. The goal of the sender is still one of influencing others rather than being culturally sensitive.
2. Receivers need to be understood only insofar as the understanding is necessary to manipulate them more effectively.
3. Absent from this view is any sense that the participants coproduce and co-interpret the messages that are communicated.
4. Limitations of the actional and interactional views led to the development of the *transactional view*.

c. *Transactional* views of communication emphasize the shared creation of messages and meanings.

1. The transactional view emphasizes the construction or shared creation of messages and meanings.
2. It recognizes that the goal of communication is not merely to influence and persuade others but also to improve one's knowledge, to seek understanding, to develop agreements, and to negotiate shared meanings.
3. All participants simultaneously interpret multiple messages at all moments.

4. Communication is *contextual*.

- a. All communication takes place within a setting or situation called a context.
- b. The context includes the physical, social, and interpersonal settings within which messages are exchanged.

1. The physical context is the actual location of the interactants and influences the communication process.

2. The social context refers to the widely shared expectations people have about the kinds of interactions and behaviors that normally should occur in various social events.
3. The interpersonal context refers to the expectations people have about the behaviors of others as a result of differences in the relationships between them.
4. Communication is a *process* that includes people, relationships, activities, objects, and experiences that are dynamic rather than static.
  - a. Viewing communication as a process implies that things are changing, moving, developing, and evolving.
  - b. The very same message may be interpreted very differently when said at different stages of the communication process.
5. Communication involves *shared meanings*.
  - a. Meanings are created and shared by groups of people as they participate in the ordinary and everyday activities that form the context from common interpretations.
  - b. The focus is on the ways people attempt to “make sense” of their common experiences in the world.

C. Interpersonal communication is comprised of 4 characteristics.

1. Interpersonal communication occurs between small groups of people – such as couples, families, friends, work groups, and even classroom groups.
  - a. It involves person-to-person interactions.
  - b. It involves the perception of a developed social bond between the interactants.
2. Interpersonal communication involves people interacting exclusively with one another.
  - a. It typically involves clearly identified participants who are able to select those with whom they interact.
  - b. When people interact directly with one another, they may use many sensory channels to convey information.
3. Interpersonal communication is adapted to specific others.
  - a. Because interpersonal communication involves a small number of people who can speak exclusively to one another, it is possible for the participants to assess what is being understood and how messages are being interpreted.
  - b. As messages are designed to evoke a particular effect in other people, the messages can be adapted to fit the specific people for whom they are intended.
4. In interpersonal communication, the interpretation of messages can occur essentially simultaneously with their creation, allowing communicators to adapt their messages instantaneously.

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### III. The Challenge of Communicating in an Intercultural World

A. Like an iceberg, all cultures have a small visible component and a larger (and arguably more important) part that is hidden from view.

1. The visible component is observable and can be perceived directly with our senses.

a. It includes everyday features such as the culture's food, music, tools, and other preferences.

2. The hidden component of culture is comprised of a culture's deeply held beliefs, values, and norms about the "correct" ways to behave and the "right" ways to interpret what is happening in the world.

B. There are no simple prescriptions or pat answers that can guarantee competent interpersonal communication among people from different cultures.

1. No one has discovered how to eliminate the destructive consequences of prejudices from different cultures.

2. The importance of maintaining one's cultural identity often creates emotions that promote fear and distrust while encouraging cultural autonomy, independence, and possibly destruction.

C. As the world is transformed into a place where cultural boundaries cease to be impenetrable barriers, differences among people become reasons to celebrate and share rather than to fear and harm.

### IV. Summary

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What are some of the implications for a United States in which, within your lifetime, European Americans will no longer comprise a majority of the population?
2. Identify some of the ways in which your life is influenced by the presence of individuals from cultures that differ from your own.
3. Which of the imperatives for intercultural competence—demographic, technological, economic, peace, or interpersonal—is the most powerful motivator for you to improve your intercultural competence?
4. Communication has been defined as "a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people create shared meanings." What does each of the elements in this definition mean? In your view, which is/are the most important?

## INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

### Activity 1.1: Cultural Self-Introduction

Goals of this activity:

To understand the diversity of cultural backgrounds present in the class.

To allow students to become acquainted with each other during the first week of class.

Introductory Comments:

This exercise is designed to allow students to begin grappling with the idea of “culture.” Before going over the definition of culture in class, have students write a 2-3 page paper in which they describe their cultural background. The papers should be somewhat informal and not involve library research. On the day the papers are due, have the students take part in one of the two activities below.

Directions:

- 1a. Ask students to present extemporaneously a short (1-2 minute) introduction of themselves to the class based on their papers.
- 1b. After each student introduction, allow class members to ask questions and make comments.

OR

- 2a. Ask students to organize themselves into groups of four. Students should describe for their group members their cultural backgrounds. Try to ensure that groups are as culturally diverse as possible.
- 2b. Have a representative from each group briefly introduce each person in his or her group with short descriptors of their cultural backgrounds.
- 2c. If there is time, allow other class members to ask questions or make comments.

Time Required:

Using either format, this activity should take approximately 1-1/2 to 2 hours. How much time you allow for questions and comments will affect the total time involved.

Additional Comments:

This activity has the added benefit of providing information to the instructor about the cultural backgrounds of his or her students.



## **Activity 1.2: Intercultural Autograph Hunt**

Goals of this activity:

To demonstrate the diversity of experiences present in one classroom.

To establish connections among students who share certain experiences and knowledge.

Introductory Comments:

This exercise can be an excellent first- or second-day “ice-breaker.” Students interact with each other and have an opportunity to find out some interesting information about one another at the beginning of the course. A discussion on the definition and components of culture could follow this exercise.

Materials:

Intercultural Autograph Hunt sheet (example given on following page.)

Directions:

1. Ask each student to complete an “Intercultural Autograph Hunt” sheet like the example provided on the following page. Students should try to find a different person to sign for each item. Supplement this list with your own items.
2. After students have completed their sheets, go through the list and ask students who signed for a particular item to raise their hands.
3. Ask students to consider the connections between themselves and others in the class based on similar experiences as reflected in the autograph hunt. Some questions for discussion:
  - a. Which items were the most difficult to find an autograph for? The easiest?
  - b. Which items are shared by the largest number of people in the class? The smallest number of people?
  - c. How is this kind of information useful in establishing bonds or connections between people who are meeting for the first time?

Time required:

Allow about 30 minutes for this activity. If it is conducted on the first day of class, give time on the second day for discussing the students’ findings.

## Intercultural Autograph Hunt

Find someone who fits each description below, and get his or her signature on this sheet. Try to find a different person for each description.

**Find someone who . . .**

Knows how to use chopsticks \_\_\_\_\_

Has been in more countries than you have \_\_\_\_\_

Has purchased a Eurail pass \_\_\_\_\_

Has parents who speak a second language at home \_\_\_\_\_

Pronounces words differently than you do \_\_\_\_\_

Knows where Kuala Lumpur is \_\_\_\_\_

Considers this school a foreign culture \_\_\_\_\_

Drives an imported car \_\_\_\_\_

Has been in cars where traffic moves on the left side of the road \_\_\_\_\_

Knows where Morocco is \_\_\_\_\_

Is wearing some clothing not made in the USA \_\_\_\_\_

Likes to eat sushi \_\_\_\_\_

Has studied Spanish \_\_\_\_\_

Has a relative from a different culture \_\_\_\_\_

Has read the reading assignment for today \_\_\_\_\_

Has watched TV soap operas in a language other than English \_\_\_\_\_

Was born in another country \_\_\_\_\_

Knows what time it is right now in Paris \_\_\_\_\_

Has a good friend from a culture other than his or her own \_\_\_\_\_

Has an internet pal from another culture \_\_\_\_\_

Has eaten couscous \_\_\_\_\_

## Test Bank

### Multiple-Choice Questions

1. The need to develop intercultural skills in today's world is clearly apparent due to

- A) economic trends.
- B) technological changes.
- C) demographic imperatives.
- D) all of the above.

Factual

Answer: D

Page Ref: 2

2. The term global village refers to

- A) a world that is made smaller by the mass media's ability to bring international events into people's homes.
- B) individuals who experience other cultures and return to their own communities to share their new-found cultural knowledge.
- C) the idea that, since all people are humans, cultural differences are incidental compared to the similarities all humans share.
- D) the intermingling of culturally different people within a single community.

Factual

Answer: A

Page Ref: 6

3. Changing cultural demographics in the United States have been due largely to

- A) a decrease in the European American population.
- B) the government's efforts to increase immigration from Central American countries.
- C) reorganization of neighborhood boundary lines.
- D) an increase in the Latino and Asian American populations.

Factual

Answer: D

Page Ref: 3

4. Changing cultural demographics in the United States have been due largely to changes in the patterns of

- A) cultural identity.
- B) birth and death rates.
- C) immigration.
- D) intermarriage rates.

Factual

Answer: C

Page Ref: 4

5. Compared to less-competent interactions, which of the following is likely to occur in very competent intercultural relationships?

- A) Doubt will increase and certainty about meanings will decrease.
- B) People will feel less comfortable about the meanings of words and their referents.
- C) Individuals' sense of "rights" and "wrongs" will increasingly be threatened by the actions of those with an alternative cultural framework.
- D) All of the Above

Applied

Answer: D

Page Ref: 11

6. Communication is defined as

- A) symbolic.
- B) a process.
- C) involving the creation of shared meanings.
- D) all of the above.

Factual

Answer: D

Page Ref: 12

7. Which term stands for or represents a unit of meaning?

- A) sender
- B) transaction
- C) symbols
- D) receiver

Factual

Answer: C

Page Ref: 12

8. Which of the following can be a symbol?

- A) words
- B) actions
- C) objects
- D) all of the above

Conceptual

Answer: D

Page Ref: 12

9. Which statement is NOT true?

- A) One outcome of communication is that the participants understand what the others are

trying to communicate.

B) Understanding is a necessary ingredient to say that communication has occurred.

C) Agreement is not a requirement of communication.

D) Completely accurate interpretations of the communication transaction are necessary for communication to occur.

Conceptual

Answer: D

Page Ref: 14

10. Which view of communication perceives communication as a linear, one-way process of message sending?

A) communication as transaction

B) communication as action

C) communication as interaction

D) communication as contextual

Factual

Answer: B

Page Ref: 15

11. Which view of communication focuses on feedback from receivers to senders?

A) communication as transaction

B) communication as action

C) communication as interaction

D) communication as contextual

Conceptual

Answer: C

Page Ref: 16

12. Which view of communication recognizes that all participants are simultaneously interpreting multiple messages at all moments?

A) communication as transaction

B) communication as action

C) communication as interaction

D) communication as contextual

Conceptual

Answer: A

Page Ref: 16

13. Which of the following statements on the view of communication as transactional is FALSE?

A) Communication is not meant merely to influence and persuade.

B) Communication is intended to improve one's knowledge, to seek understanding, to develop agreements and to negotiate shared meanings.

C) Communication is intended to influence and control the receiver for the purpose of reaching agreement.

D) There are no such entities as pure senders and pure receivers.

Conceptual

Answer: C

Page Ref: 16

14. The \_\_\_\_\_ context includes the actual location of the interactants.

A) social

B) physical

C) interpersonal

D) personal

Factual

Answer: B

Page Ref: 17

15. The \_\_\_\_\_ context refers to widely shared expectations about particular kinds of communication interactions.

A) social

B) physical

C) interpersonal

D) personal

Factual

Answer: A

Page Ref: 17

16. Interpersonal communication typically involves

A) messages sent to large, undifferentiated audiences.

B) a small number of sensory channels through which information is conveyed.

C) clearly identified participants.

D) all of the above.

Conceptual

Answer: C

Page Ref: 19

17. As the United States becomes more culturally diverse,

A) one's professional success and personal satisfaction will increase dramatically.

B) intercultural competence will become a necessity.

C) it can be assumed that people will embody similar cultural views.

D) all of the above.

Applied

Answer: B

Page Ref: 2

18. Failure to create a harmonious intercultural society in the U.S. will likely result in

- A) increased flexibility in one's sense of right and wrong.
- B) culturally diverse communities with ample economic resources.
- C) conflicts and hatred.
- D) lost opportunities to tear down cultural barriers.

Applied

Answer: C

Page Ref: 12

19. Communication is symbolic because it requires that people

- A) reach agreement.
- B) belong to culturally diverse communities.
- C) create shared meanings.
- D) are actional.

Conceptual

Answer: C

Page Ref: 12

### **True-False Questions**

1. Throughout the world, there is an increasing pattern of cross-border movements that is creating the most extensive wave of cultural mixing in recorded history.

Factual

Answer: TRUE

Page Ref: 3

2. Cultures are like icebergs because the most significant portion of each is hidden from view.

Conceptual

Answer: TRUE

Page Ref: 20

3. The typical foreign-born resident in the U.S. is a recent immigrant with a tenth-grade education.

Conceptual

Answer: FALSE

Page Ref: 4

4. If there was actually a community called "Global Village" inhabited by 100 people, more than half of the population would be Asians.

Factual

Answer: TRUE

Page Ref: 5

5. In today's world, it is safe to assume that one's neighbors and co-workers will have similar

cultural views about what is important and appropriate.

Applied

Answer: FALSE

Page Ref: 9

6. Symbols never vary in their degree of arbitrariness.

Conceptual

Answer: FALSE

Page Ref: 13

7. Communication has occurred even if there is no degree of understanding between the participants.

Factual

Answer: FALSE

Page Ref: 14

8. In communication, understanding typically equals agreement.

Conceptual

Answer: FALSE

Page Ref: 14

9. The transactional view of communication emphasizes the construction or shared creation of messages and meanings.

Factual

Answer: TRUE

Page Ref: 16

10. There are a few simple ideas that, if learned from Lustig and Koester's text, will guarantee that you will communicate competently with people from other cultures.

Applied

Answer: FALSE

Page Ref: 21

### Short Answer/Essay Questions

1. Marshall McLuhan coined the term **global village** to describe the consequences of the mass media's ability to bring events from the far reaches of the globe into people's homes, thus shrinking the world. How do contemporary technologies permit people to learn about, and interact with, people from foreign countries and cultures?

Factual

Page Ref: 6

*Answers should reference communications media (Internet, GPS, cell phones, etc.) and modern transport systems (public transportation, highways, rail and air travel).*

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*Internet-based social networking sites such as Facebook, Baidu, LinkedIn, and Google+, as well as such technological innovations as Skype, Twitter, Chat, and Yahoo Messenger, are used by an extraordinarily large number of people to connect with others whom they may have never met—and perhaps will never meet—in face-to-face interactions.*

*Modern transportation systems contribute to the creation of the global village. A visit to major cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Mexico City, London, Nairobi, Istanbul, Hong Kong, or Tokyo, with their multicultural populations, demonstrates that the movement of people from one country and culture to another has become commonplace.*

2. Edward T. Hall analogized that cultures are like icebergs because they have both visible and hidden parts. Using a cultural group you belong to, discuss an aspect of each part and explain how the hidden culture could complicate communication with someone who is not familiar with your culture.

Conceptual

Page Ref: 20

*The visible component is what is observable and can be perceived directly with our senses. It includes everyday features such as the culture's food, music, tools and other preferences. The visible component also includes the ways people actually communicate—verbally, nonverbally and interpersonally—and thereby maintains an ongoing sense of community and connection.*

*The hidden component of culture, which is perhaps more central and important for understanding the core aspects of culture and intercultural communication, is comprised of a culture's deeply held beliefs, values, and norms about the "correct" ways to behave and the "right" ways to interpret what is happening in the world.*

*Answers might reflect complications because none of the visible elements of a culture can ever make sense without an understanding of the deeper and more important components that remain hidden from view.*

3. Your friend Maria is frustrated with you after she spent \$10 to see a bad movie that you recommended. You still maintain that it was a good movie. Remembering that communication is symbolic, how would you explain to Maria the different understandings of what good meant?

Applied

Page Ref: 12-13

*Answers should include reference to the private (unshared) meanings of the word "good" that was not communicated to each other and/or symbols can use arbitrary meanings.*

4. Explain the range of factors that can contribute to failed communication in our diverse world.

Applied

Page Ref: 2-23

*Diverse answers may include anything from immigration mixing cultures to arbitrary symbol systems to the lack of a guaranteed model to improve intercultural communication competence.*

5. Can changing the context of communication change how messages are interpreted? Why or why not?  
Give an example to justify your answer.

Conceptual

Page Ref: 17-18

*Answers may vary and should reference the physical, social or interpersonal contexts of communication.*