

# INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

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### Introduction:

The sharing of information among the people belonging from different cultures and countries is known as intercultural communication. It is also viewed as a branch of study that deals with the issues faced in intercultural communication. The significance of intercultural communication has increased significantly due to the rapid spread of globalization. This has also led to the conducting of various research studies in the field of intercultural communication. The current piece of work is concerned with evaluating a text based on the area of intercultural communications. The study is in the form of an essay and is focused on critically examining the chosen article. The article finally ends with a precise conclusion based on the current work.

### Justification of the chosen article:

The text chosen for the current study has been written by Kathy McKeiver, Global engagement commission chair. The title of the text is “identifying barriers to effective intercultural communication”. The main reason for choosing this article is that it specifically focuses on the barriers prevailing in the process of effective intercultural communication. In other words, the

article instead of discussing multiple aspects of intercultural communication, discusses particularly the challenges faced in intercultural communication. This is useful in concentrating on a single specific topic. On the other hand, the language used in the article is quite easy to understand and the knowledge level is in-depth. Another major reason for the selection of this article is that it discusses the problems of intercultural communication in relation to the students coming to study in the U.S. The education industry is one of the major contributors to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the US. Thus, the article is highly relevant to barriers faced in modern times.

### **Discussion:**

The piece of article reflects the hurdles and the impact of the same that comes in the way of intercultural communication. The author is an academic advisor and gets the opportunity to observe the inner sides of intercultural inconveniences within international students and the local academic team and students. The author identifies some of the major hurdles are **ethnocentrism, apprehension towards intercultural conversation and anxiety**. The study deals with the different hurdles that mainly coarsen the path of intercultural communication and develop a fear

among the international students to participate in any activity involving communication with the students or even the teachers belonging to other cultures.

Here, it is important to understand that culture can be understood as a characteristic feature of certain groups rooted to specific geographical location with specific behavior, beliefs, thought process, usage and ways to interaction with nature and biodiversity and also the prototypes of equipments used for different activities involving lifestyle. Robertson (2012) mentioned that culture get ingrained among the group members and slowly become the guideline for living and a social institution with time. The social beings that are a part of some culture get involved in different cultural activities and slowly develop a social identity. Sometimes, the social identity gets identified as a national identity which may not be appropriate in most of the times. The social identity is mostly based on the perceptions of the persons of another culture. The interpretation gets tagged as characteristics of the whole nation.

The author emphasizes the impact of ethnocentrism as a major barrier to intercultural communication. The feeling of any person regarding the superiority of own culture with respect to other cultures or any specific culture is known as ethnocentrism. The author in the article expresses the feeling that the ethnocentrism among the students and some staffs of the US universities emerge out to be the main barrier in communication among the students and even among the international students and the educational team of advisors or teachers. The author identifies the US as one of the most attractive educational destination for students outside US. The situation leads to a heterogeneous composition of several countries and cultures. Lack of intercultural capabilities among the advisory team can lead to the intercultural issues from the preliminary steps.

The author emphasizes the positive attributes of the inter mingling of students from various cultural backgrounds. The scope to understand and learn about so many cultures at the same place is a great opportunity. However, openness to embrace the traits is essential to taste the benefits else the presence of ethnocentrism can spoil every advantage. The most essential characteristic needed in any education staff is the openness and empathy towards all cultures. The misinterpretation of the cultural groups can arise from the preoccupied notions. The existing notions among the people regarding some other people belonging to different cultural backgrounds hinder the intermingling among the students.

The author however analyzes the positive aspects of ethnocentrism. The students from different cultural backgrounds have different degrees of ethnocentrism. The presence of ethnocentrism is not always a hindrance in the way to intercultural communication as the lower level of ethnocentrism induces the students to be more inquisitive about the other cultural superior as per their concept. The traits are slowly learnt and inculcated. The tendency to mingle with people associated with so-called superior culture is noted among the students with low ethnocentrism. The notions are sometimes beneficial in this way.

The reactions to the existing ethnocentrism and pre-perceived notions among the people existing among the ambience of heterogeneous culture can be seen as anxiety. The feeling is associated with the fear of communicating to anyone outside the same cultural group. The feeling of not being understood in spite of speaking or communicating through body languages slowly develops a mixed

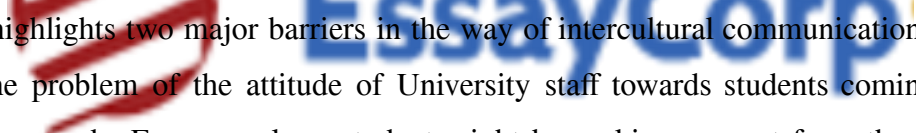
feeling of frustration and that leads to impatience. The students even start avoiding communicating with professors fearing that the problem will not be understood. Here, the role of education advisors become significant as bridging the gap is very important. The students or even any person who gets such feelings about the US education system can actually influence negatively on the forthcoming students from the same country. This needs to be avoided and the educational advisors need to intervene and solve the situation.

In case the attitude is prejudiced, the educational advisor emerges as another hurdle for the students. Instead of understanding the characteristics of the students based on the cultural background and providing psychological support, the advisors often are observed to blame the international students for being afraid, lamenting and even lack critical mental capabilities. The blaming gets percolated to the blamed and the impact creates even more hurdles in the inter cultural communication or activities.

Surprisingly, the biggest hurdle in the process of mediating the inter-cultural communication issues is the inherent biases and ethnocentrism in the advisors themselves. In this context, Samovar et al. (2014) mentioned that the persons involved in mediating activities need to intentionally press down their own incapability and deficiencies to act in a conscious and justified manner. The educational advisors also need to follow the same path. The role of any person in the position to smoothen the psychological hurdles has to develop certain qualities and the most important character here is empathy. The students need to be guided in the way that benefit the educational process the most as the students who come all the way from far off countries have the target to succeed professionally and develop personally. The advisors and all the educational staff in this scenario need to go beyond the prescribed and formal communication process about education and try to indulge personally to extend a hand of support. Servaes (2012) mentioned that the students who have left their own people and traveled such a huge distance to study in foreign countries, need to be treated in such a way that the perspective of the culture of the host people remains positive and warm in their memory.

The author of the text has mainly used secondary data in the article. The author uses a very easy and lucid language to discuss the issues. This enhances the level of understanding and interpretation for the readers. The author seems to have used descriptive design in presenting the work. On the other hand, it is seen that the text does not contain any tables, data or statistics. This seems to be a key weakness of this article. Another key limitation of the current study is that the author focuses on only one particular barrier named ethnocentrism. However, there are other barriers as well that could hamper the process of intercultural communication. These barriers are language differences, body language, level of context, value of time, negative stereotypes & prejudices and feelings & emotions but these barriers have not been discussed in this text.

The author holds that the rising number of international students in the country is actually beneficial to the community. This is mainly because of the fact that an increased number of students from different cultures increases the cultural diversity in the campus. This in turn provides a great opportunity to the students and the University staff to learn new things from the people belonging from foreign cultures. In this context, Asante et al. (2013) stated that increased cultural diversity leads to the generation of new ideas which can improve the performance level of an organization or community. Thus, this view of the author seems to be quite justified. However, a potential risk remains as increased cultural diversity might also dilute local cultures and traditions.



The author highlights two major barriers in the way of intercultural communication. Firstly, the text highlights the problem of the attitude of University staff towards students coming from different cultural backgrounds. For example, a student might be seeking support from the University staffs however rude behavior of the University staff might prevent such students to approach further for any support. This can also happen if the University staff are lenient towards international students. Secondly, the text highlights the problem of ethnocentricity as a barrier towards effective intercultural communication. As mentioned by Carbaugh (2013), ethnocentricity is the belief in an individual that his own ethnic group or culture is superior to other cultures or ethnic groups. It is a tendency of the ethnocentric individuals to view other people from the perspective of their own culture. The good thing about the author here is that the author considers the presence of ethnocentricity among all individuals. However, the author holds that ethnocentricity becomes a

barrier only when the level of the same is quite high among individuals. Ethnocentrism is also viewed as related to intercultural communication apprehension which is yet another barrier to intercultural communication. Here, intercultural communication apprehension is the fear associated with communicating with people from different cultures. On the contrary, Martin and Nakayama (2013) argued that ethnocentricity encourages solidarity among social groups, cooperation and national culture. Thus, ethnocentrism seeks to create a sense of belonging among the members of a society or ethnic group (Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta, 2012). The text highlights the role of academic advisors and University staffs towards helping international students to overcome the barrier of ethnocentrism which could further help in improving the intercultural communication process.

### **Conclusion:**

The current study is mainly focused on evaluating a chosen text in the area of intercultural communications. The chosen text is mainly focused on discussing the barriers to intercultural communication in relation to international students coming in the US for study purpose. The study revealed that ethnocentrism is one of the biggest barriers in the way of intercultural communication. This also leads to the formation of another barrier named intercultural communication apprehension. However, it can be argued that total absence of ethnocentricity among individuals could weaken the foundation of culture and social system. On the other hand, the presence of ethnocentricity makes the cultural foundation strong. Thus, a moderate or low level of ethnocentrism does not become a barrier in the way of intercultural communications, however presence of a high level of ethnocentricity might act as a barrier in intercultural communication. Thus, the management of the Universities need to come up with solutions and supports to keep the ethnocentricity level among the individual within a controlled limit.

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