

Cross-cultural Communication

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Introduction

Course objectives

All tribes and ethnic groups either try to understand each other and live together in peace and harmony or they fail to understand each other which often leads to conflict or war.

How can we serve one another?

Isaiah 41:9-10

Two main points

1)

2)

One of the most destructive, painful words in the English language is _____.

How to enter in the issue of understanding culture?

A PARABLE

A story is told about a monkey and a fish. It seems a typhoon had temporarily stranded a monkey on an island. In a secure, protected place, and waiting for the raging waters to recede, he spotted a fish swimming against the current. It seemed obvious to the monkey that the fish was struggling and in need of assistance. Being of kind heart, the monkey resolved to help the fish. A tree dangled precariously over the very spot where the fish was struggling. At considerable risk to himself the monkey moved far out on a limb, reached down and snatched the fish from the "threatening" waters. Immediately scurrying back to the safety of the shelter, he carefully laid the fish on dry ground. For a few moments the fish showed excitement but soon settled into a peaceful rest.

Joy and satisfaction swelled inside the monkey. He had helped another creature and he had done it successfully.

Adapted from Ann Templeton Brownlee

What do you think about the monkey?

What would the fish say to the monkey if it could talk?

Lecture 1. Cross-cultural communication

How can it be visualized?

People grow up looking very much like the cultural background in which they were raised. If your cultural background is "square," you turn out to be square. If it is "round," you are round.

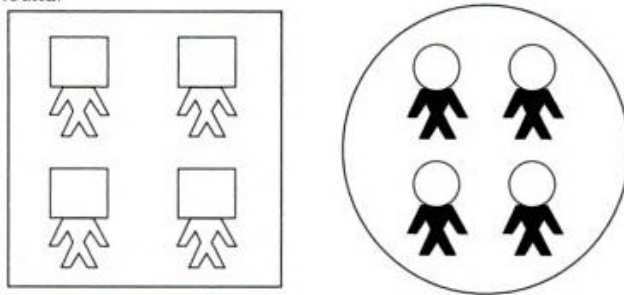


Figure 7.1. Square and Round Cultures

When you leave the safety of your own culture and enter another, you do not leave your cultural baggage behind. You take it with you. And you may feel like the proverbial square peg in a round hole.

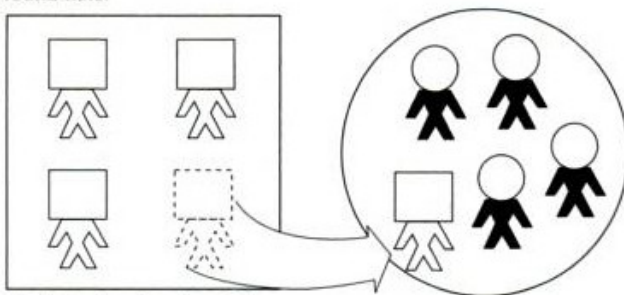


Figure 7.2. Fitting into Another Culture

But you can adjust; you can fit in. You can adapt yourself to this new culture. You can make the transition effectively and gradually identify more and more with your host country colleagues. The result is greater fulfillment and productivity for you and your employer.

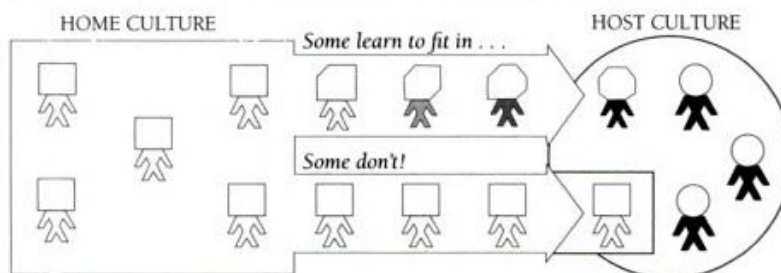
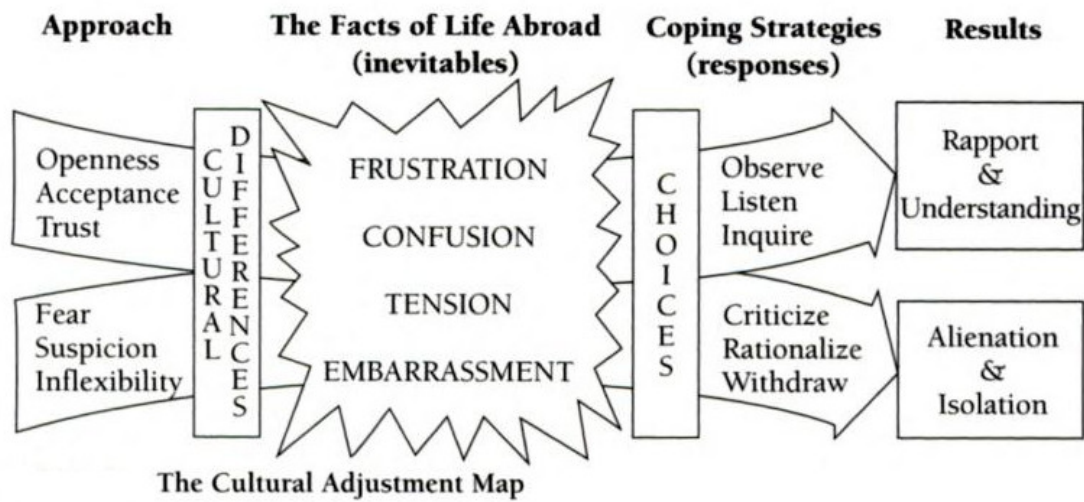


Figure 7.3. Adjusting and Refusing to Adjust

Cultural Adjustment Map



What kinds of people do a good job in another culture?

Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) Study

An Empirical Study of Canadian Technical Assistance: Adaptation and Effectiveness on Overseas

Assignment

By Daniel Hawes and Frank Kealey

Profile of the Effective Technical Assistance Advisor Overseas:

1. Interpersonal Skills:

Flexibility – flexible response to ideas, beliefs or points of view of others; open

Respect – responsive to others which helps them feel valued; attentive and concerned; acknowledges others

Listening – a good listener who accurately perceives the needs and feelings of others

Relationship Building – demonstrated ability to build and maintain relationships; trusting, friendly, and cooperative

Control – calm and in full control when confronted by interpersonal conflict or stress

Sensitivity – sensitive local social, political, or cultural realities

2. Strong Sense of Self Identity

Initiative – one of the first to act, make suggestions or propose a plan of action

Confidence – expresses and demonstrates self-confidence with regard to personal goals and judgment

Frankness – frank and open in dealing with others

3. Realistic Pre-departure Expectations – has some concerns about living overseas but still expects a rewarding experience

4. Technical Ability

Source: Kealey, Daniel. 1979&2000. Cross-Cultural Effectiveness. A Study of Canadian Technical Advisors Overseas. Canadian Foreign Service Institute.

Communication Model

Speaker

Hearer

Message

Frame of Reference

Desired Action

Resultant Action

Feedback

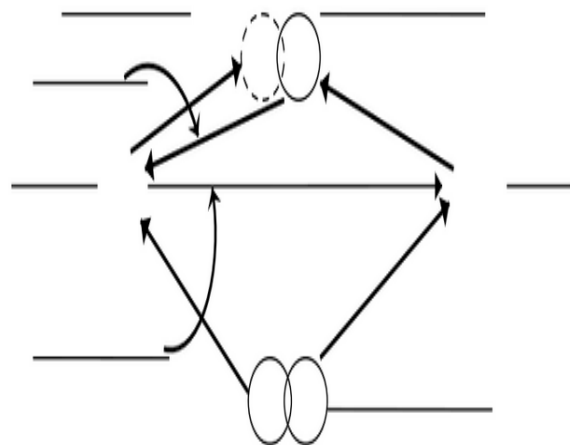
Source of Assumptions

Key to understanding myself and you

Key to interpreting life situations

Key to responding to life situations

Feedback is the key to the appropriate change and the source of growth



Test

The Story

A business man had just turned off the lights in the store when a man appeared and demanded money.

The owner opened a cash register. The contents of the cash register were scooped up, and the man sped away. A member of the police was notified promptly.

“True” or “False” or “?” (questionable)?

1. A man appeared after the owner had turned off his store lights.
2. The robber was a man.
3. The man did not demand money.
4. The man who opened the cash register was the owner.
5. The store-owner scooped up the contents of the cash register and sped away.
6. Someone opened a cash register.
7. After the man who demanded the money scooped up the contents of the cash register, he ran away.
8. While the cash register contained money, the story does not state how much.
9. The robber demanded money of the owner.
10. The story concerns a series of events in which only the following persons are referred to: the owner of the store, a man who demanded money, a member of the police force.
11. The following events were included in the story: someone demanded money, a cash register was opened, its contents were scooped up, and a man dashed out of the store.

Lecture 2. Cultural Differences

Every man is a potential adversary, even those whom we love. Only through dialogue are we saved from this enmity toward one another. Dialogue is to love, what blood is to the body. When the flow of blood stops, the body dies. When dialogue stops, love dies and resentment and hatred are born.

Ruel Howe
The Miracle of Dialogue

CORE CULTURAL VALUES

WESTERN CULTURE:

Communication: direct; face to face; forthright; verbal

Community: a group of individuals or independent beings

Foreigners: distance; suspicion; polite; acknowledgment

Logic: linear

Conflict: confronting; corrective; avoiding; passive aggressive

Conduct: take responsibility; be accountable

Reality: visible, tangible, empirical

Language: dominant use of active voice

OPENNES AND TRUTH ARE FOUNDATIONAL VALUES

MAJORITY WORLD CULTURE:

Communication: indirect; parabolic; third party; non-verbal

Community: submit to group values; loyalty to group

Foreigners: courtesy; relational “yes”

Logic: narrative, circular; zig-zag; spiral

Conflict: manage through indirect methods

Conduct: save face; avoid shame; protect honor

Reality: invisible; spirit world; experience

Language: dominant use of passive, stative and reflexive voice

MAINTANANCE RELATIONAL HARMONY AND GROUP COHESION ARE FOUNDATIONAL VALUES

Lecture 3. Conflict management

One of the greatest stumbling blocks to understanding other people within or without a particular culture is the tendency to judge others' behavior by our own standards.

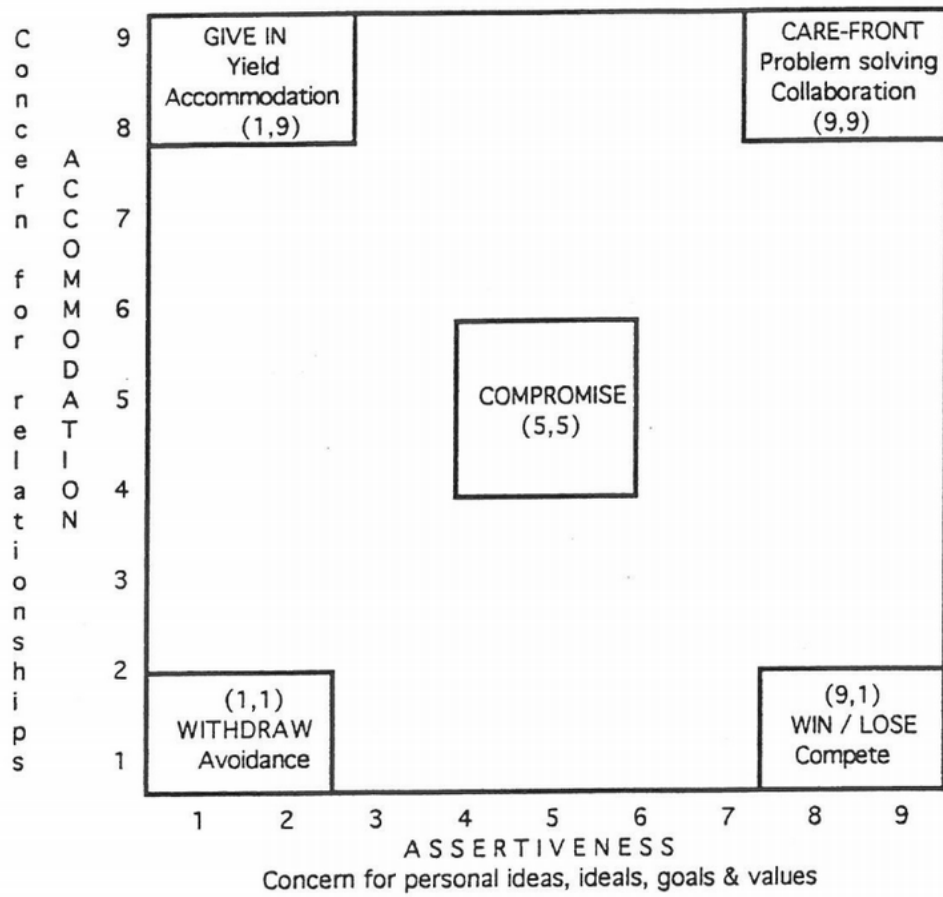
James Downs

Observations and Assumptions Regarding Conflict

Most, nearly all, people...

1. Are not malicious.
2. Dislike conflict .
3. Are poorly equipped to deal constructively with conflict.
4. Have a history of pain from conflict at home, in school or the neighborhood .
5. Will create conflict but usually not intentionally; most do not intentionally; most do not intend to hurt another person.
6. Discover conflict emerges from cultural or personal differences rather than a violation of absolute theological or moral values.
7. Find conflict enormously taxing emotionally and physically.
8. Desire peace and harmony in relations .
9. Want to understand and be understood .
10. Wish for a good way to restore unity and solidarity.
11. Often conflict emerges from unresolved anger.
12. Some people have a high need to be right in everything (or nearly everything) and to prove others wrong... an attitude that generates conflict with others.

Styles of conflict management



Style of conflict management	Assumptions inherent in this style	Situations in which style of conflict resolution “makes sense”
Withdraw (1,1)	Differences are eternal, inevitable, unchangeable. Differences are bad.	1. You have no power. 2. You’re counting to ten to cool off. 3. Damage of confrontation too great. 4. The issue is trivial.
Win/Lose (9,1)	Differences are black & white. Someone is right (=me). Differences need to be erased.	1. Time is short. 2. Ideas are of crucial importance. 3. Don’t want to be taken advantage of.
Give in (1,9)	Differences drive people apart because they are personal attacks. Conflict calls for sacrifice & yield.	1. You are wrong. 2. Building credit for future. 3. You have low power or want harmony. 4. Willing to let others learn by mistake.
Care-fronting (9,9)	Differences are natural and normal. Occasion for creative problem solving.	1. Both sets of concerns too important. 2. Commitment to goal and/or each other. 3. Where learning humanness is important.
Compromise (5,5)	Differences must be seen in light of common good. Should be aired, then give & take.	1. Goals moderately important. 2. Equal power of participants. 3. A Permanent settlement would be complex. 4. Time is factor.

Indirect approach to conflict management

Forgiveness

Communication Principles for Managing Conflict

Context: Joshua 22:1-21

Principle 1: They declared their allegiance to God 22:22a

Effect: Both groups shared a common ground; brothers not adversaries.

Principle 2: They were ready to be wrong 22:22h

Effect: Emotions brought under control.

Principle 3: They sent “I” messages rather than “you” messages 22:22-29

Effect: Open communication rather than defensive communication.

Principle 4: They explained their reasoning 22:22-29

Effect: Motives and intentions clarified.

Principle 5: They spoke to the issue and did not accuse in return or rationalize 22:26-29

Effect: Understanding replaces assumptions and premature judgments.

Principle 6: They pursued understanding before agreement 22:26-29

Effect: Long term resolution is now possible.

Principle 7: They pursued a win-win strategy not a win-lose strategy.

Effect: Reconciliation and peace now a realistic outcome .

Principle 8: Unity was the primary goal 22:33-34

Effect: God’s glory is revealed for today and future generations.

Further thoughts on Principle 4:

First, think the best about the other person rather than assuming the worst; assumptions can easily become facts in our minds.

Assume a reasonable explanation exists for what you do not understand.

Wait patiently and non-judgmentally until the other person can provide you with their

Perspective

Use “I” messages when attempting to deal with a conflict situation

“I don’t understand”; “I need your “I am confused”; “I am feeling anxious
(or frustrated, or betrayed, or. . . .”

Lecture 4. Pilgrimage to Servanthood

Openness

Definition: the ability to welcome people into your presence and make them feel safe.

Biblical concepts: hospitality and shalom

Primary skill: suspend judgment

Acceptance

Definition: the ability to communicate value, regard, worth and esteem to the other person.

Biblical concepts: acceptance, respect and honoring one another

Primary skill: seeing everyone as image bearers of God

Trust

Definition: the ability to build confidence in the relationship so that both parties believe the other will not intentionally injure them but, in fact, act in the other's best interest.

Biblical concepts: community, fellowship, forgiveness and reconciliation

Primary skills: initiating and sustaining interpersonal solidarity

Learning

Definition: the ability to glean relevant information about and from the other person.

Biblical concepts: common grace and the priesthood of all believers

Primary skills: listening exploring and responding

Understanding

Definition: the ability to see patterns of behavior and underlying values that reveal the integrated wholeness and integrity of a person and a people.

Biblical concepts: creation and the Imago Dei

Primary skills: patience and discernment to see the big picture, the tapestry

Serving

Definition: the ability to relate to people in such a way that their dignity as human beings is affirmed and they are more empowered to live their lives in God glorifying ways.