

COMMUNICATION ACROSS CULTURES

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1. Introduction.

Communication, culture, and the correlation between them have become a topic of great interest to many researchers. Among them, Trugill (1983), Canale (1983), Wolfson (1983), Richards et al. (1985, 1992), Wierzbicka (1991), Saville-Troike (1986, 1996), Ting-Toomey (1988, 2005), Blommaert (1991), Chick (1996), Kramersch (1998), Byram & Fleming (1998), Samovar & Eporter (2001), Gipson (2002), Quang (2002, 2003), Thomson (2003), Ting-Toomey & Chung (2005) are just a few popular names. So what is communication? What is culture? And what is the correlation between them?

With regard to communication, Richards et al. (1992: 64) defines it as “*the exchange of ideas, information, etc. between two or more persons*”. This sharing of ideas happens not only through the use of language (*i.e. verbal communication*) but also through nonverbal factors (*i.e. non-verbal communication*) (Saville-Troike, 1986; Gibson, 2002; Quang, 2002, 2003).

Verbal communication is realized through two codes: writing and speaking with *intra-linguistic* factors (e.g. lexicon, grammar rules, phonetic rules, or rules of language use), whereas non-verbal communication refers to *paralinguistic* and *extra-linguistic* factors. Para-linguistic factors include vocal characteristics (e.g. pitch, volume ...), types of vocal flow, vocal interferences, and silence. Extra-linguistic

factors consist of body language (e.g. eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, postures ...), object language (e.g. clothing, make-up ...), and environmental language (e.g. setting, conversational distance, time ...).

Culture can be defined differently from different perspectives. In the anthropological sense, culture is meant “to consider any aspect of the ideas, communications, or behaviors of a group of people which gives them a distinctive identity and which is used to organize their internal sense of cohesion and membership” (Scollon and Scollon, 2001: 39-140, cited in Thomson, 2003: 20). In other words, culture is “the total set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behavior, social habits, etc. of the member of a particular society” (Richards et al., 1985: 84). At its simplest, culture can be regarded as shared ways of seeing, thinking, and doing by people in a community.

People who live in the same culture can find it easy to communicate with one another because it gives them an interconnected set of shared ideas, assumptions, beliefs, values, and even unwritten rules. On the contrary, when people from different cultural backgrounds communicate with one another, there is immense potential for difficulties to arise because of different cultural values, attitudes, or beliefs. So

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it is obvious that communication and culture are closely interconnected to the extent that culture is reflected in communication and any study of communication must account for the significance of culture. Studies of communication in one culture and across cultures have led to the technological terms of ***intra-cultural communication, intercultural communication, and cross-cultural communication.***

Intra-cultural communication is a unitary concept which refers to communication between members of the same cultural background who use the same language to communicate within the country. There is generally not much difficulty for these members to communicate with one another because they share the same set of beliefs, attitudes, customs, behavior, social habits, etc. They know very well how to behave appropriately; that is, they are well aware of what should be said or how to interpret what is said.

The concepts of intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication are not identical, to a certain extent, because different researchers may use different terms or even when they use the same terms, they may not mean exactly the same things. Gipson (2002: 9), for example, claims that intercultural communication occurs when the communicators are from different cultures. This definition, however, does not clarify whether different cultures refer to different ethnic, social cultures within the boundaries of the same national language or to two cultures or languages across the political boundaries of nation-states.

A similar definition of intercultural communication which fails to clarify the notion of cultural differences is given by Kim and Ruben (1988: 305). According to these authors, intercultural communication is the communication process taking place in a circumstance in which communicator's verbal and nonverbal patterns are significantly different because of the differences in culture norms.

Kramsch (1998: 81), on the other hand, gives a more explicit definition of intercultural communication when he considers it the interaction of people from different minor cultural backgrounds within one country or nation in which the same national language is spoken. The author claims further that intercultural communication also refers to the interaction of two languages and cultures across the boundaries of nation-states. In this case, intercultural can also be termed cross-cultural:

Different from this line of reasoning, to a certain extent, Chick (1996: 330) who is along with Carbaugh's (1990) argument claims that cross-cultural communication studies are those of act sequence (e.g. speech act performance or turn-taking conversations) within and across cultures, while intercultural communication studies involve various features (e.g. power distance or formality) of two cultural systems in a specific cultural encounter (e.g. in the work place of a multicultural company).

The similarities and differences on the conceptualization of intercultural communication and cross-cultural communication are summarized in Table 1

Authors	Year	Intercultural communication	Cross-cultural communication
Gibson	2002	Communication between people from different cultures	
Kim & Ruben	1988	Communication in which communicators' patterns of verbal and nonverbal of coding and decoding are significant different because of cultural differences	
Kramersch	1998	+ Communication between people from different ethnic, social cultures using the same national language within a nation. +interaction of two cultures or languages across the political boundaries of nation-states.	+interaction of two cultures or languages across the political boundaries of nation-states.
Chick	1996	Interaction of two cultural systems in a particular intercultural encounter realized through a number of features	Communication within or across cultures, realized from that act sequence such as speech act performance, choice of address terms and turn-taking conversations

Table 1: *Similarities and differences in the conception of intercultural and cross-cultural communication.*

As can be seen, Kramersch's (1998) definitions seem to be the most explicit, reasonable ones. However, to avoid confusion, when intercultural is identical to cross-cultural, the latter should be used. Thus the terms can be simply defined as follows:

- *Intra-cultural communication* is communication between people who live in the same country and come from the same cultural background.

- *Intercultural communication* is communication between people who live in the same country but come from different cultural backgrounds.

- *Cross-cultural communication* is communication between people who live in different countries and come from different cultural backgrounds. It should then be notified that in communication between people of widely different cultural backgrounds, there is immense potential for difficulties to arise. Some major differences between cultures and potential difficulties in

communication across cultures are discussed next in part II.

2. Communication across cultures

Now we continue examining major differences in some culture patterns and communication styles among cultures with reference to Vietnam and English-speaking countries, the representatives of which are the UK, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand.

2.1. Culture patterns

There are a number of culture patterns which have been presented and discussed. Among those, three patterns are discussed in this paper to serve as the background for our investigation into communication styles. They are high-versus low-power-distance cultures, high- versus low-context cultures, and collectivism versus individualism.

2.1.1. High- power- distance cultures versus low- power- distance cultures

These terms are originated from Hofstede's (1991, 2001) long-term studies.

The author's findings and discussion are then followed and supported by a number of researchers, including Spencer-Oatey (1997), Gibson (2000), Samovar & Porter (2001), and Ting-Toomey & Chung (2005).

Hofstede's studies were conducted at a multicultural international company, the IBM, in 50 countries and three regions. The power-distance index (PDI) in these countries are clearly presented

and carefully discussed. However, for the purpose of focusing on comparing and contrasting Asian countries and English-speaking countries, including Britain, The United States of America, Australia, and New Zealand, I only mention these relevant countries, extracted from the table of power-distance-index values (Table 2).

Country	PDI score	Score rank	Country	PDI score	Score rank
Malaysia	104	1	United states	40	38
Philippines	94	4	Australia	36	41
Indonesia	78	8/9	Great Britain	35	42/44
India	77	10/11	New Zealand	22	50
Singapore	74	13			
Hong Kong	68	15/16			
Thailand	64	21/23			
South Korea	61	27/28			
Taiwan	58	29/30			
Japan	54	33			

Table 2: Power-distance-index values for 50 countries and three regions

(Extracted from Hofstede, 1991: 26; 2001: 87)

As can be seen, Table 2 shows high-power-distance values for Asian countries and lower values for the USA, Great Britain and its former dominions. Although Vietnam was not a country under the investigation, it seems to be logical to hypothesize that Vietnam is among other Asian countries which show high-power-distance values. This hypothesis is initially supported by the results of Ngoan's (2004) Vietnamese-American cross-cultural study on disagreeing among power-unequals in which the Vietnamese language and culture prove to be more affected by the relative power than the American counterparts.

There are various differences between high- and low-power-distance cultures. However, in this paper, I focus on discussing the differences of behavior in low- and high- PDI societies because those differences undoubtedly result in the different communication styles and language patterns that the powerful and the powerless use in their interactions. Specifically, differences in three major contexts: at home, at school/university, and at work are to be discussed.

According to Hofstede (1991: 32-33, 2001: 99-100), in the large-power-distance cultures, children are expected to be obedient towards their parents. They are punished if they talk back or contradict their parents. Independent

behavior on the part of a child is not encouraged. Respect for parents and other elders is seen as a basic virtue; children see others showing such respect, and soon acquire it themselves. Respect for parents and elder relatives lasts through adulthood. That means parental authority continues to play a role in people's lives as long as their parents are alive. Parents and grand parents are treated with formal deference even after their children have actually taken control of their own lives.

On the contrary, in the small-power-distance cultures, children are more or less treated as equals as soon as they are able to act. The role of parental education is to let children take control of their own affairs as soon as they can. Active experimentation by children is encouraged; they are allowed to contradict their parents and speak their mind; they are expected to show self-initiative and learn verbal articulateness and persuasion skills; they learn to say "No" very early. Relationships with others are not dependent on the other's status; formal respect and deference are seldom shown.

In terms of teacher-student relationship, Hofstede (1991: 33-34, 2001: 100-101) claims that, in the large-power-distance cultures, the parent-child inequality is perpetuated by a teacher-student inequality that caters to the need for dependence well established in the student's mind. Teachers are treated with respect (and older teachers even more so than younger ones); students may have to stand up when a

teacher enters the room. In the classroom there is supposed to be a strict order with the teacher initiating all communication. Students in class speak up only when invited to; teachers are never publicly contradicted or criticized and are treated with deference even outside school.

On the contrary, in the small-power-distance cultures, teachers are supposed to treat their students as basic equals and expect to be treated as equals by the students. Young teachers are more equal, and therefore usually more liked, than older ones. Students make uninvited intervention in class, they are supposed to ask questions when they do not understand something. They argue with teachers, express disagreement and criticism in front of the teachers, and show no particular respect to teachers outside school.

The work place is also a context where power conception in high- and low- PDI cultures is clearly distinguished. Hofstede (1991: 35-36) claims that in the large-power-distance societies, superiors and subordinates consider each other as existentially unequal; the hierarchical system is felt to be based on this existential inequality. Organizations centralize power as much as possible in a few hands. Subordinates are expected to be told what to do. In contrast, in the small-power-distance societies, subordinates and superiors consider each other as existentially equal; the hierarchical system is just an inequality of roles, established for convenience; and roles may be changed,

so that someone who today is my subordinate may tomorrow be my boss.

In general, people in small-power-distance cultures tend to value equal power distributions, equal rights and equal relations, whereas people in large-power-distance cultures tend to accept unequal power distributions, hierarchical rights, and asymmetrical role relations.

2.1.2. High-context cultures (HCC) and low-context cultures (LCC)

Distinction of characteristics between high-context cultures and low-context cultures is discussed by many authors, including Ting-Toomey (1988), Samovar and Porter (2001), Gibson (2001), Thomson (2003), and Ting-Toomey & Chung (2005).

Thomson (2003: 29-30), for example, remarks that in high-context cultures, as often found in the east, contextual factors are relied on to provide meaning to the communication, whereas in the low-context cultures more closely associated with the west, explicit verbal content of the communication is emphasized.

Thus, the author mentions the distinction between the east and the west, but it seems to be too general because no typical examples of eastern or western countries are given. Ting-Toomey & Chung (2005) make this distinction more explicit by giving some typical examples of HCC and LCC in Table 3.

LCC Examples		HCC Examples	
Germany	United States	Saudi Arabia	Japan
Switzerland	Canada	Kuwait	China
Denmark	Australia	Mexico	South Korea
Sweden	United Kingdom	Nigeria	Vietnam

Table 3: Country examples of low-context and high-context communication (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2005: 170)

As can be seen from Table 3, Vietnam and other Asian countries like South Korea, China, and Japan are high-context cultures, while typical English speaking countries like the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States are low-context cultures.

Distinguishing the two groups of cultures with each other, from the perspective of communication styles, Ting-Toomey (1988: 225) remarks that the LCC system values individual value

orientation, line logic, direct verbal interaction, and individualistic nonverbal style with clearly displayed intentions. In contrast, the HCC system values group value orientation, spiral logic, indirect verbal interaction, and contextual nonverbal style in which intentions and meanings are situated within the larger shared knowledge of the cultural context.

Thus this distinction of culture patterns shows its reliance on peaking

contexts. The level of context dependence in understanding the meaning of an utterance in social interactions helps to decide whether a country should be put in the group of high- or low- context cultures.

Along with this line of argument, but with a focus on further explaining what context refers to, Samovar and Porter (2001:81) explain that in high-context cultures, information is provided through gestures, the use of space, and even silence. Communicators in high-context cultures tend to be more aware of their surroundings and their environment and can communicate those feelings without words ...

Supporting this line of reasoning but from the perspective of business intercultural communication, Gipson (2001) gives some interesting examples to clarify his explanation. According to him, in high-context cultures, meaning does not always have to be put into words. It is non-verbal clues that are important, as in the context in which the situation takes place. The meaning of words can even depend on the context. For instance, “yes” can mean anything from “I agree”, to “I am listening”, to “No”.

2.1.3. Collectivism and Individualism

Cultures can also be divided into collectivism and individualism (Ting-Toomey, 1988; Althen, 1988; Samovar and Porter, 2001; Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005). In this distinction, English-speaking countries are marked with individualism, whereas collectivism is another cultural pattern common in the Orient.

Ting-Toomey (1988: 224) distinguishes the characteristics of individualism with those of collectivism. She argues that in general, individualistic cultures emphasize individualistic goals over group goals, individualistic concerns over group concerns, and individual rights and needs over collective responsibilities and obligations. On the contrary, Collectivistic cultures value group goals over individual goals, group concerns over individual concerns, and collective needs over individual needs. Individualistic cultures are concerned with self-face maintenance, autonomy, choices, and negative-face needs, while collectivistic cultures are concerned with both self-face and other-face maintenance, interdependence, reciprocal obligations, and positive-face need.

As can be interpreted from the remarks, individualism refers to individual-oriented cultures in which negative politeness strategies are preferred to satisfy each individual’s negative needs. In contrast, collectivism refers to group-oriented cultures in which people prefer positive politeness strategies to satisfy each person’s positive face want, though they are aware of maintaining both self’s face and the other’s face.

Samovar & Porter (2001: 65-66) even emphasize that individualism stresses competition, individual initiative, achievement, and decision making. Meanwhile, collectivism values group decisions and organization dependence of each individual.

All in all, individualism emphasizes the importance of individual identity,

rights, needs, responsibility, and personal autonomy, whereas collectivism values group identity, rights, needs, harmony, and relational interdependence.

To sum up, all the three distinctions of culture patterns that have been discussed show different sets of cultural beliefs, values, attitudes, and behavioral characteristics; these differences can be realized in the preferred communication styles of the people in each culture pattern.

2.2. Communication styles

Althen (1988: 21) argues that communicative style refers to various aspects, ranging from the topics people prefer to discuss, their favorite forms of interaction in conversation, the depth to which they want to get involved with each other, the communication channels on which they rely, to the level of meaning they want to communicate.

Thus, to study the communication styles of people in different culture patterns, researchers can examine them from different perspectives. In this paper, three popular styles concerned with directness-indirectness, formality, and politeness are discussed.

2.2.1. Direct versus indirect communication styles

This distinction of communication styles is very popular in studies in cross-cultural communication and inter-language pragmatics. In the direct verbal style, verbal statements tend to reveal the speaker's intentions with clarity, while in the indirect verbal style

verbal statements tend to camouflage the speaker's actual intentions.

With regard to the comparison between groups of cultural patterns which have been discussed, people in high-context cultures prefer indirect communication style, while those in low-context cultures prefer direct communication style.

Ting Toomey (1988: 217), for example, argues for the case of preference to directness and indirectness in low- and high- context cultures, respectively. Her major arguments are that in cultures that prefer a direct mode of interaction in everyday life, such as low-context cultures in Germany, Scandinavia, Switzerland, and the United States, a direct mode of behavior probably is perceived to be not so threatening as an ambiguous mode of interacting. Unlikely, in cultures that nurture an indirect mode of interacting, such as high-context cultures in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, a direct mode of communicating can be perceived as highly threatening to one's own face.

2.2.2. Informal versus formal communication styles

Ting-Toomey & Chung (2005:176) remark that the informal verbal style emphasizes the importance of informality, casualness, and role suspension in verbal communication, whereas the formal verbal style emphasizes the importance of status-based and role-based interaction which demonstrates formality and large power distance.

Thus, the former emphasizes the importance of casual or horizontal

interaction, whereas the latter stresses the significance of vertical or hierarchical interaction. It also implies that the preference of informal or formal communication style is most affected by the low or high power distance in each culture.

Generally, people in high-power-distance cultures are more in favor of formal communication style, while those in low-power-distance cultures prefer to be more informal. This tendency can be realized in the use of first name in America and in Japan, as Rodgers (1997: 12) claims,

“The American emphasis on informality and the attempt to be on a personal first-name basis may be interpreted as disrespectful, particularly among the older and more traditional members of a Japanese delegation.”

This tendency can also be recognized in the Vietnamese situation. From the author’s own experience and observations, American or New Zealand teachers of English usually allow their university students in Vietnam to call them by their first names just after one or two classes and they feel comfortable with that. In contrast, those university students may never call their Vietnamese teachers by their first names because that means disrespect or impoliteness in the Vietnamese culture.

2.2.3. Negative politeness-oriented and positive politeness-oriented communication styles

This distinction of communication styles is based on the politeness theory suggested by Brown and Levinson

(1987). It is a reflection of the culture patterns of individualism and collectivism. Since the appearance of this politeness theory, there have been a great number of cross-cultural studies of speech act performance which are based on the framework of the theory. However, although many politeness strategies from the framework have appeared in those studies, many other strategies which were not noted by Brown and Levinson (1987) have been realized in others’ studies. Additionally, the general assumption that the Oriental cultures, which are marked with collectivism, prefer positive politeness strategies, while western cultures, many of which are considered as individualism, are in favor of negative politeness strategies is not always true in many researchers’ studies.

According to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory, because western people want to reduce the possibility to threaten the addressee’s *negative face* (i.e. the basic claim to territories, personal reserves, or rights to be independent), they prefer *negative politeness strategies* (e.g. *question-hedge, apologizing, impersonalizing S&H, etc.*). Meanwhile, eastern people want to avoid threatening the addressee’s *positive face* (i.e. basic desire to be appreciated or approved by others), so they are in favor of *positive politeness strategies* (e.g. *giving gift to H, token agreement, or asserting common ground*).

However, in several studies, including Ngoan’s (2004) investigation, the frequency of using certain *negative politeness*

strategies like *question-hedge*, *apologizing*, or *impersonalizing S&H* by eastern people is very high. A possible explanation for this phenomenon is that they want to show their desire for face respect.

Thus Ting-Toomey's (1988) explanation for this phenomenon is worth taking into consideration. According to this author (1988: 217), while Brown and Levinson

(1987) focus mainly on the concept of "*face-threat*", the concept of "*face-respect*" has not been explicitly dealt with in their politeness theory.

The culture patterns and conversation styles which have been discussed in this paper can be summarized with reference to Asian and English-speaking countries in Table 4.

	Asian countries	English-speaking countries
Example countries	China, Japan, Korea, Vietnam	The UK, the USA, Australia, New Zealand
Culture patterns	High-power-distance cultures	Low-power-distance cultures
	High-context cultures	Low-context cultures
	Collectivism	Individualism
Communication styles	Indirect style	direct style
	Formal style	Informal style
	Positive politeness-oriented style	Negative politeness-oriented style

Table 4: *Some popular culture patterns and communication styles in Asian and English-speaking countries*

It should, however, be noted that although these general assumptions on communication styles have been proved in a great number of studies, the proportion of realizing these styles may vary from situation to situation. Thus more cross-cultural studies on speech act performance should be conducted to reduce the difficulties in communication across cultures.

2.3. Barriers to communication across cultures

When cross-cultural communication takes place, there is immense potential for misunderstandings to occur, especially if the differences between two cultures are great; and "*where the cultural differences are greater, the misunderstandings are greater, too*" (Trugill, 1983: 131).

Thus what can prevent people from communicating successfully with people

from other cultural backgrounds? Gibson (2002: 10-17) discusses some barriers; they are *attitude*, *perception*, *stereotypes*, *interpretation*, and *culture shock*.

2.3.1. Attitude: In practice, culture may be so deeply rooted that it is not easy to change one's original culture to take a new one. For example when a Vietnamese student studies in the USA or Australia, s/he may find it uneasy to call their teachers by their first names, though their American teachers may tell them they are happy to be called by first names by their students. It is because calling teachers by their first names is commonly considered a sign of disrespect in Vietnam and students in Vietnam may never call their Vietnamese teachers in that way. As a result, A Vietnamese student may call his/her American teacher by a social title (*e.g. Mr./Mrs., Dr., Professor ...*) plus their

first name like “*Mr. Peter*” or “*Dr. Roly*”, which is a formal way in Vietnam. Then s/he causes Vietnamese-American pragmatic transfer because in America the formal norm should be “*Title + surname/full name*”.

2.3.2. Perception: The way we perceive is culturally determined, and a general lack of awareness of this is another barrier to cross-cultural communication. For example, in many Asian countries, it is possible for people to ask certain personal questions, such as: “*How old are you?*”, “*Are you married?*”, or “*How many children have you got?*” even at initial meetings because it is perceived as showing consideration or solidarity to each other. However, if these Asian people ask their American counterparts the same questions, especially at initial meetings, not being aware that these are considered impolite in American culture because these intrude into the hearer’s privacy, communication breakdown may occur.

2.3.3. Stereotypes: A stereotype is a fixed idea or image that many people have of a particular type of person or thing, but that is not true in reality. It is really a barrier, as Scholon and Scholon (2001: 168, cited in Thomson, 2003:31) claims,

“Stereotypes limit our understanding of human behavior and intercultural discourse because they limit our view of human activity to just one or two salient dimensions and consider those to be the whole picture.”

Thus even communicators are aware of some cross-cultural differences

between cultures, they may fail to communicate successfully with their foreign communicating partners. It is because their awareness is some kind of stereotype. For instance, when a Japanese boss criticizes his American employees in a multicultural company straightforwardly because he thinks that the Americans prefer directness, he may fail to run the company because although the Americans are in favor of directness, they live in a low-power-distance culture in which equality is very important; thus bosses in America are expected to use more indirect strategies when criticizing their inferiors. Also, a person communication style may be different from his cultural background, so it is necessary to distinguish what is part of a person’s cultural background and what is part of his personality.

2.3.4. Interpretation: This is the case of misinterpretation, in which two people have interpreted the same statement in completely different ways. This barrier is mainly caused by a lack of thorough understanding of the counterpart’s language or culture. I remember some kind of misunderstanding between a Chinese and an Australian in an Australian video: After work, an Australian says goodbye to his Chinese colleague, “Bye. See you later.” and the Chinese colleague asks, “What time?”. It is because he thinks that the Australian wants to make an appointment with him without realizing that it is just a common way to say goodbye in Australia.

2.3.5. Culture shock: Culture shock has, according to Kim & Ruben (1988: 302), been used to refer to a form of personality maladjustment which is a reaction to a temporary unsuccessful attempt to adjust to new surroundings and people.

In cross-cultural communication, it occurs quite often. This is one of the simplest examples. When an American who does not know much about Vietnamese culture comes to Vietnam to work in an American-Vietnamese joint venture, he may have culture shock and feel extremely uncomfortable when his Vietnamese colleagues keep asking him too many personal questions. This experience may make him feel difficult to get on well with his counterparts at the beginning.

To sum up, the barriers discussed by Gibson (2002) are convincing, but they are related mainly to a cross-cultural speaker's cultural knowledge. The speaker may also face other difficulties if his linguistic skills and interaction skills are not good enough to be successful in communication across cultures. This suggests some ideas for training foreign/second language learners to be successful in cross-cultural communication.

2.4. Successful cross-cultural communicators

Successful cross-cultural communicators are those who achieve the *communicative competence*. First introduced by Hymes in the mid-1960s, the term has enjoyed interesting popularity among teachers and

researchers. It has been clarified by Canale (1983), Wofson (1983), Saville-Troike (1986, 1996), Richards et al. (1992), and Tarone & Yule (1993).

Wofson (1983: 61), for example, argues that communicative competence includes not only the mastery of grammar and lexicon, but also the rules of speaking. To be more specific, the speaker must know when it is appropriate to open or end a conversation and how to do that, what topics are appropriate to particular speech events, which forms of address are to be used to whom and in which situations, and how such speech acts like greetings, compliments, apologies, invitations and complaints are to be given, interpreted and responded to.

Swan (1980, cited in Tarone & Yule, 1993: 49) proposes a helpful analysis of the components of communicative competence; they are (1) *grammatical competence* – the knowledge of what is grammatically correct in a language, (2) *sociolinguistic competence* – the knowledge of what is socially acceptable in a language and (3) *strategic competence* – the knowledge or how to use communication strategies to communicate intended meaning.

Saville-Troike (1986: 25-26) shares the same ideas, but he uses three terms: “*linguistic knowledge*”, “*interaction skills*”, and “*cultural knowledge*”, and he gives completely explicit explanation of the terms.

In general, all researchers seem to agree that communicative competence involves knowing not only the language

code but also what to say to whom, and how to say it appropriately in a given situation. It also involves the social and cultural knowledge speakers are expected to have to create and interpret linguistic forms.

Because communicative competence is so important for a successful cross-cultural communicator, training programs for them should aim at not only teaching learners linguistic knowledge but also focusing on social, cultural, interactional factors so that they are capable of anticipating possible differences in interactive style and react

appropriately and effectively when they are confronted with those differences

3. Conclusion

So far in this paper, the author has argued for the appropriate concepts relevant to communication and culture, examined several major culture patterns and communication styles with relevance to Vietnam and English-speaking countries, and discussed what cross-cultural speakers are expected to provide themselves with to overcome the potential difficulties in cross-cultural interactions.

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Giao tiếp và giao tiếp giao văn hoá là đề tài thu hút sự quan tâm và tranh luận của rất nhiều học giả. Bài báo này nhằm góp phần làm rõ thêm các khái niệm về văn hoá, giao tiếp, giao tiếp nội văn hoá, liên văn hoá và giao văn hoá. Bài viết cũng giới thiệu một số mô típ văn hoá như văn hoá có khoảng cách quyền lực cao so với văn hoá có khoảng cách quyền lực thấp, ngữ cảnh cao so với ngữ cảnh thấp và hướng về cá nhân so với hướng về cộng đồng. Song song với các mô típ văn hoá này là các phong cách giao tiếp gồm phong cách gián tiếp so với trực tiếp, trang trọng so với thân mật và hướng về lịch sự dương tính so với hướng về lịch sự âm tính. Ngoài ra, tác giả cũng nêu lên một số trở ngại trong giao tiếp giao văn hoá và đưa ra một vài ý kiến về phương thức đào tạo và học tập để có thể thành công trong giao tiếp giao văn hoá.