

## A Study of Cross-Cultural Communication- *in the context of Business Communication Teaching*

<sup>1</sup>Suneeta De, <sup>2</sup>Sohini Ghosh

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor, Department of Basic Science and Humanities, Dr. BC Roy Engineering College, Durgapur, India

<sup>2</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Basic Science and Humanities, Dr. BC Roy Engineering College, Durgapur, India

**Corresponding author email:** [suneeta.de@gmail.com](mailto:suneeta.de@gmail.com) , [sohinighoshbcrec@gmail.com](mailto:sohinighoshbcrec@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *Cross Cultural Communication is an interesting yet rarely focussed upon aspect of Business Communication Teaching. Despite being researched since the 1980s, and being featured in almost all relevant programs of study, it never surfaced as a deal breaker till the 2000s when world economy opened up to usher in globalization. Though debatable whether globalization still drives trade forward, it is undoubted that virtual platforms are the future of Business Communication. Given this reality post Covid 19, it is imperative to be aware of the cultural nuances that govern the exchange of information across the world. This paper is an amalgamation of findings of past researchers in this field whose works founded the genre of cross cultural communication studies, as well a looking forward to the future where successful Business Communication pivots around not only geographical nuances of cultural differences but also takes into account the post-modern technological platforms governed by AI.*

**Key Words:** *cross cultural communication, PDI, gender biases, 'rajbhasha', AI, sentience, business communication teaching.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION:

Cross Cultural Communication and its nuances form the bedrock of Communication studies the world over. Cultural barriers are some of the most pronounced roadblocks that have the potential to derail a communicative endeavour. They are not only those of the spoken language but also, and perhaps more importantly, of the social norms and accepted behaviour. For one uninitiated in the knowledge of a communicatee's cultural frames of reference, it is easy to fail to achieve the desired communicative outcomes intended, despite getting the message across correctly in terms of syntax. Audience analysis and message customization, is one of the integral precursors to any communication one plans.

From the perspective of a Business Communication Teacher working with young adults in Eastern India, specifically West Bengal, it was important to trace the knowledge of cultural differences that have been noted and studied in the past. Stalwarts of studies in this field most certainly include Geert Hofstede, Heather Bowe and Kylie Martin. Keen students of ELT in general and Cross Cultural Communication Studies in particular, the book, Communication Across Cultures, has been seminal to an understanding of this area of Business Communication Teaching. Post Covid 19 induced transition of world businesses on to the virtual mode, there has been a blurring of geographical borders. Communication, trade, indeed education as well, is now more online than in person. Towards that end, though there is a democratization of content and formats of messages between senders and receivers, there is undoubtedly also some hidden cultural codes that may accelerate as well as impede the flow of successful communication.

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW:

There is an abundance of studies on cross cultural communication and related protocols. A few of these deserve special mention in that they contributed towards the ideas discussed in the paper, They are, randomly arranged as follows: 'English for cross cultural communication' edited by Larry Smith, Springer, 1981 ([link.springer.com/content/pdf/bfm:978=1-349-16572-8/1.pdf](https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/bfm:978=1-349-16572-8/1.pdf)) which focuses on the absorption and indigenization of English by colonized countries long after they stopped being colonies. Asia and Africa were considered as cases on point. Here, one did not find a uniform homogenization of language, indeed, quite the opposite effect was noted.

Cultural, linguistic contexts determined vocabulary and language use. This contributed to multiple cross-cultural schemas within the erstwhile colonized countries. India, for instance has indigenized the language English to the extent of contributing words and moods to its native vocabulary and culture. More Indians in India speak English than native Britons, as mentioned by Braj Kachru in 'The Other Tongue – English Across Cultures' Pergamon Press, 1983. 'Cross Cultural Communication', by Deborah Tanner 1983 (eric.ed.gov/?id=ED253061), lists the cultural differences in interpersonal communication through a study of prevalent norms of telephone etiquette in that culture. 8 types of broad areas of difference between communicating across cultures were noted. They are (1) when to talk (2) what to say (3) pace and pause (4) listening (5) intonation (6) respect/acceptance of convention (7) ambiguity (8) coherence and cohesion. Discussions on these parameters, in the book, are usually centred on experience of telephone etiquette in Greece. There is a significant disconnect between the way Asians and Europeans use conversation and turn taking for work. Geert Hofstede's 'Cultural Dimensions Theory', (corporatefinanceinstitute.com/resources/management/hofstedes-cultural-dimensions-theory/) is a framework that is used to distinguish between national cultures and cultural dimensions and assess their impact on a business setting. Hofstede's ideas of cultural dimensions in communication, arisen out of his experiences at IBM and associated surveys, assess cross cultural communication in a business setting. Per his identification, cultural categories vary across countries in the following 7 aspects- (1) PDI (2) Collectivism and Individualism (3) Uncertainty Avoidance Index (4) Femininity and Masculinity (5) Short Term Vs Long Term Orientation (6) Restraint Vs Indulgence/ *Spontaneity* (italics and idea, mine)

**Power Distance Index** – High PDI refers to an exhibited respect for rank and authority, feudal though it may appear at the outset. Low PDI refers to open offices, delegation of authority, decentralization of power. **Individualism Vs Collectivism** – Individualism refers to according greater importance to personal goals vis a vis community goals – the Me Approach. Collectivism refers to the team being accorded greater importance vis a vis one's personal goals – the We Approach. **Uncertainty Avoidance Index** – High Uncertainty Avoidance Index refers to a desire to avoid uncertainty to the extent possible and is reflected via a low risk-appetite. Conversely, Low Uncertainty Avoidance Index refers to the ability to manage as well as manipulate ambiguity to a high degree and is reflected via high risk appetite. **Masculinity Vs Femininity Approach** – this is often reflected as the tough Vs Tender narrative. Masculinity Approach centres upon specified gender roles, concentration of wealth, power and material accrument goals. It is also reflected via norm-defiance. Conversely femininity approach is tolerant of gender fluidity, modesty incorporation in life choices and norm-acceptance. **Long Term Orientation Vs Short Term Orientation** – This is reflective of traditional Asian ideas of 'suffer now, enjoy later' and encourages delayed gratification. Short Term Orientation focuses on being in the moment because one's future is unknown. This is reflective of Generation Z even in India. **Indulgence Vs Restraint**-Indulgence Approach centres around the concept of carpe diem, while Restraint promotes suppression of gratification via social norms. On the one hand, Indulgence promotes creativity and spontaneity whereas, Restraint promotes planning for the future, farsightedness, [communicationtheory.org/cross-cultural-communication/]20-12-2022 mentions an integral component of a group discussion that has relevance even in the East Indian Business Communication and Soft Skills classrooms, that of 'turn-taking'. In many cultures, eg. Japanese, Chinese, and even in Northern India, it is considered rude to interrupt someone in course of their speaking, specially if the speaker is a man, and of a higher rank/authority than the listener. East, West and South India are more democratized. This is a very broad generalization and not inclusive of exceptions. LaRay M Barna's perspectives of cultural miscommunication arises from: (1) **an assumption of similarities** – suggesting that 'different' is bad (2) **frame of reference** – same language but different contexts leading to different interpretation (3) **kinesics** – gestures, dress, use of space, management of time are all areas of cultural misunderstanding, if not understood well. The simple 'headnod' in India may mean both a 'yes' or a 'no' depending on the Indian state one belongs to. 'Cross Cultural Communication' written by George H Gardner (*The Journal of Social Psychology*, <https://doi.org/10/1080/0024-545.19629712373>, pp241-256) contrasts the persuasive approach versus colonial and authoritarian approach to communicating with 'persons of another culture'. In 'Cross Cultural Communicative Barriers in the Workplace' by R.Delecta Jennifer and Dr G.Raman, *International Journal of Management*, Vol 6, Issue1, Jan2015, <https://www.iaeme.com/IJM.asp> discusses the fact that it is broadly recognized that cultural factors act as invisible barriers in the international business communication scene. Ethnocentrism is often the root of all communicative mistakes. Lack of awareness of the diversity of cultures engaged in a workplace also contribute to a communicative disconnect. More than any other culture barrier, what contributes most to cross cultural barriers is language. scoopskiller.com/management-materials/human-resources-management/cross-culture-management/ Jul6th 2018, discusses factors affecting cross cultural communication to be (1) language (2) environment & technology (3) conception of authority (4) social organization and history (5) non-verbal communication/ behaviour.

### **3. DISCUSSION :**

The colonial past of India has contributed to the language English being predominant in the constitution as almost, a national language. For all practical purposes, Article 343 of the Indian Constitution, and later the Official Languages Act of 1963, lists no language as National Language, but allows English to be listed as 1 of the 22 official languages. For all practical purposes India uses English as her official language for Business Communication across the country. The Hindi heartland of Northern Indian states are, of course, shrill in their demand for the Hindi language to be accepted as the 'rajbhasha' or National Language of India. There has been no directive to this regard as yet, though. The Education Industry stresses upon the acquisition of English as a passkey to professional growth. Towards that end, one finds the recruitment processes also, being carried out in the Queen's Language. Hence, purely from a teacher's perspective, one still attaches a great deal of weightage to the acquisition of fluent, if not accurate English. The Englishes spoken in India, correctly and collectively so termed, vary from one geography of the country to another. One has the 'Hinglish', an amalgamation of Hindi and English imbued with the accents and contextual relevance of the Indian native regional nuances. The 'Benglish', on the other hand, is reflective of the marriage of Bangla, an East Indian language, with English, incorporating the accents and the schema of the Indian native to this part of the continent. There is of course, the ubiquitous 'Tamlish', an amalgamation of Tamil, the language of many South Indians, and English. Silicon Valley is aware of this World English. The French, German, Italian and Chinese versions of the Queen's tongue also abound. Undoubtedly, they too not only imbue English with their L1 influences but also give to the language their cultural contexts.

Teaching Business English and Business Communication in English, in India, takes into account these variables and heterogeneities that colour the experience both for the learner as well as the teacher.

Cross Cultural Communicative Challenges in the Indian Classroom must trace the genealogy of Business Communication right from its roots in English Teaching in India. English Teaching for academic purposes started in India around the 1800s. Thereafter it branched out into Literature studies and Language studies. Language studies or ELT also branched into ELT (for academic purposes) and ESP/ETP (English for Special Purposes/ English for Technical Purposes). Teaching Communication in an Indian classroom traces the sources of this evolving discipline in order to first contextualize it.

Since Communication Teaching is a young subject born out of the forces of globalization it does not yet, have an organised pedagogy for itself. One learns partly from the pre-existing pedagogy of ELT in India, and mostly from that in the West. As an offspring of ELT, and later ETP, one will not hopefully be wrong in assuming that research on best practice pedagogy for Business Communication may verily start from Western pedagogy for ELT since the 1900s. Coupled with the Western past is the Eastern (Indian) present, with the only major Indian research project in this area being Prof N. S. Prabhu's.

The syllabus content of Communication is often divided into predetermined parts with every theory and practical class hour virtually accounted for. This, coupled with the deadline of semester exams, often limit the teacher from going beyond the itemized syllabus of the University, thereby treating it as just another credit garnering subject. Also, as Communication/ Technical English etc. is treated as a non-core subject by most professional colleges, a step-daughterly treatment is meted out to the subject as well as to the suggestions put forward by the faculty who carry out and implement the objectives of this course in the classrooms. Rarely, if ever, is the same respect and importance, accorded to Communication by the 'core' faculty of Business Administration, Computer Application, Engineering, Tourism and Hospitality etc. Business Communication is treated as merely a vehicle of technical or domain knowledge dissemination of the students' program of studies for most parts, with very little import attached to its core value.

The teaching methodology used for this subject also mirrors the methodology of most other disciplines i.e. Transmission Type Teaching for the written portion of the syllabus and Communicative Approach for the non-written part of the syllabus.

The typical student profile for a class on Communicative English would be of learners who need the language as well as its associated Soft Skills to achieve their placement dreams. They could be anyone between 18 and 25 years of age, often older, with some technical knowledge in their field of study, intelligent, and having passed board exams pertinent to their domain of study. India does not yet allow for a student curated portfolio of subjects of study; hence Communicative English would be a mandatory credit bearing subject for the curriculum. Therefore, it would not be unrealistic to assume that all the learners in the class were not those that chose to be there, but had to. The teacher of the class would also be focussed on completing the syllabus and assessments on time first rather than have time to identify and address cross cultural challenges. These are generalisations.

The reason a discussion on the background of this subject is pertinent is because it is important to provide a context for the challenges and the communicative issues that are generated.

Globalisation brings with it the issue of commerce and communication between cultures.

The term 'culture' has a wide range of meanings today. According to Heather Bowe and Kylie Martin (2007) the gradual change the meaning of the word has undergone, dates back to early Englishmen using it as a noun, signifying a process whether of tending of crops (agriculture) or animals (pisciculture, sericulture etc). In the sixteenth century, 'culture' began to be used in terms of cultivating the human body through training both the physical and mental aspects. In the nineteenth century, the meaning was broadened to include the general state of human intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development, aligning itself to be almost synonymous with 'civilization'. This gave rise to the 'artistic works and practices' loosely including the Faculty of Arts. Goddard is quoted to have reported, by Bowe and Martin (2007) that the 'anthropological' usage of the word 'culture' was introduced into English by Taylor in the late nineteenth century in his book 'Primitive Culture'. Taylor defined 'culture' as that 'complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of a society.

When Heather Bowe co-authored her book 'Communication across Cultures' with Kylie Martin in 2007, students' interest in the business applications of linguistics was uppermost in her mind. She also wished to envisage and 'examine the link between language form and the interpretation of similar forms in different cultural contexts'. The link between linguistic forms and interpretation of meaning is multifaceted. 'Like light passing through a prism, the components of vocabulary: grammar, metaphor, style, politeness and inference are shaped by socio-cultural practices to produce language as it is used. All of these components are brought into sharp focus in the study of intercultural communication'. An understanding of intercultural communication is therefore crucially related to an understanding of how the spoken and the written word may be interpreted differentially, depending on the context. Although speakers engaged in intercultural communication typically choose a single language in which to communicate, individuals typically bring their own socio-cultural expectations of language in their encounter. To manage intercultural communication effectively, not only is it required for the speakers to be aware of the inherent norms of their own language and its situational variations but also be educated about the listeners' cultural and semantic norms. For example, different languages have different ways of marking politeness. People from some cultures tend to favour directness while people from other cultures favour less directness. In the Eastern and South East Asian cultures, emphasis is on context. These are 'high context' cultures. While the Western cultures, particularly American, are 'low context cultures'. When we write letters of leave in India, we begin with the context, the reason. We end with our request for leave. This is a bottom-up approach. We bring the core motive of the communication to the bottom. Conversely, for the same kind of leave note in America, one would begin with the key issue, in this case, the request for leave. The reasons come thereafter. This reflects their directness and, perhaps to some extent their masculinity. This gender mention here, refers only to the fundamental concept underlining the naming of some countries as 'he' countries and some as 'she'. America, for instance, is a 'fatherland' and India, a 'motherland'. We may also take the following example of differences in approach to 'self assertion' in the Japanese and the English style of communication. It is a contrast between the Western model of communication, based on the 'complex of individuality, autonomy, equality, rationality, aggression and self-assertion', and the traditional Japanese model based on the 'complex of collectivism, interdependence, superordination, subordination, empathy, sentimentality, introspection and self-denial' as characterized by Lebra .

The Japanese usually teach their students, "(D)on't say"- "I want this/I don't want this". [They use circumvention as a marker for modesty]

The Americans teach their students to, "clearly say"- "I want this/ I don't want this". [Their directness is a marker for businesslike attitude]

With recent researches into cognitive linguistics, an individual's knowledge is represented in his cognitive schema. Prof Farzad Sharifian (2004:123-5) illustrates the way in which most communication in his tradition is set in the cultural schema known as 'sharmandegi' or 'sharmindagi' (Urdu/Persian). The English equivalent of this would loosely be 'ashamed' or 'embarrassed' in order to affirm modesty. (Farsi). Below are some samples:

Eg: *While expressing gratitude*, "Aap mujhe sharminda kar rahein hain" / "You are making me embarrassed."

*While making an offering*, "Sweekar kijiye, aapke layak nahin hain, is liye sharminda hoon" / "Please accept, it is not worthy of you."

*While requesting*, "Muaaf kijiye, aapke keemti waqt se kuch pal hume denge?" / "I beg forgiveness, can I have some minutes of your valuable time?"

While apologising, “Main sharminda hoon” / “I am ashamed”.

To all of these, the correct ‘schematic’ response in Farsi would be the same: “Doshmanatoon sharmandeh basheh’ or “ dushman-e-toon sharmindeh basheh”. This would translate, in English, into, “Your enemy should be ashamed”. This ritual is similar to the English exchange of “How do you do?” “Fine, thank you. And you?”

The contrast also highlights the Eastern or Gulf countries’ traditions of ‘you- centricism’ as opposed to the ‘me- centricism’ of the Western schema.

Among the Japanese, Heather refers to the cultural schema which advocates ‘enryo’ (restraint or reserve). In England, even while giving a directive, it is politely phrased as in “Close the door, will you please?” or “Won’t you give me a glass of water?” These polite quasi-questions are termed by both Kylie and Heather as ‘whimperatives’ (excessively polite phrases bordering on grovelling).

In a group communication, for instance, a discussion, there is a difference among communicators from different cultures in the way they perceive turn-taking. Traditionally, East Asian culture (Chinese, Japanese, Indian) is enveloped in humility and modesty and therefore loathe to ‘fight’ for turns or even try to be louder in order to be heard. There is, almost never any chaos due to simultaneous speech among the Japanese. However, for selection in a job interview at the average Indian college campus, the trait that is looked for, in students, is very often, assertiveness (if not aggressiveness). In keeping with this trend, colleges in India often teach students at a GD (Group Discussion) practice session, tricks of wresting the advantage and turn of speech, from copious speakers.

The Western world views communication in a rather masculine way. There is a polite introductions/pleasantry round, which quickly culminates into the core issue of the conversation. A “How was your weekend?” is a prelude to the central issue, of, perhaps, request for some financial advice. For an Australian or an American, the response to this question would be, ‘Fine’ / “Great” / “Good” and then the talk would focus on the central issue. People from the Mediterranean (Italians, French etc) would typically respond in greater detail, taking the question itself to be the core issue instead of a prelude. This reflects upon their easy-going world view somewhat.

Dr. Geert Hofstede’s work (1980, 1983, 1991, and 1998), quoted by Bowe and Martin in ‘*Communication across Cultures*’. (2007), has been highly influential in the study of national cultural differences. Hofstede’s research is based on information gained from IBM in sixtyfour countries. He also conducted subsequent studies involving students in over twenty countries. He proposes five independent dimensions of national cultural differences that can be identified:

- a) Power distance
  - b) Uncertainty / ambiguity avoidance
  - c) Individualism / collectivism
  - d) Masculinity / Femininity
  - e) Short term / long term orientation.
- a) Hofstede mentions high Power Distance Index (PDI) as an acceptance of inequality and an asymmetrical relationship in interactions. The powerless are often blamed for society’s problems in a typical conflict between the powerful and the powerless. Latin American, Asian and African countries are those, according to Hofstede, with high PDI. A low power distance index (LPDI), however, illustrates the interdependence and inequality between members of a society and focuses on developing a harmonious relationship between the powerful and the powerless. In these cultures, the blame is on the ‘system’. Eg of LPDI are the Germanic countries. I however do not concur with Hofstede’s ideas. I believe that India is an example of an LPDI country given that ‘the system’ bears the brunt of most of the society’s angst.
- b) The next criteria that, according to Hofstede, sets the tone for cultural influences on Business Communication, is the aspect of uncertainty / ambiguity avoidance. High uncertainty / ambiguity avoidance index is characteristic of cultures where there is excessive job stress, pressure of performance and also a fear of failure. Germanic and Latin countries typically exhibit this schema and it is reflected in their mostly aggressive style of communication. A low uncertainty avoidance index is reflective of basically high dependence and faith on seniors/superiors and low levels of stress with regard to personal and individual choices. The Japanese and Chinese culture is broadly reflective of such cultural schema. The Indians too, being strongly faithful to familial and organisational hierarchy, and also intrinsically spiritual, belong to this cultural genre. The Indian Business Communication reflects that. The same also applies to Bangladesh and Pakistan, where every communication either begins or ends with invoking the divine sanction – “Inshallah” / “May God so will”. Indians often begin /end their communication with “Bhagwan ne chaha”/ “If God so will”.

- c) As regards the Individualism Vs Collectivism debate, Hofstede (1998:14) opines that the former is most palpable in developed countries while the latter, in the underdeveloped. Japan, however, is neither 'I-centric' nor 'we-centric', but is seen to take the middle path in this.
- d) A high masculinity index is almost synonymous with fatherlands or father countries. Aggression and righteousness, coupled with a powerful ambition to always best the competition, is seen. Naturally this forms the cultural schema for communication too. Femininity index emphasises tolerance, acceptance, friendliness, sacrifice and openness to negotiation. 'Mother countries' and 'motherlands' typify this trend, and again, these form the basis of the cultural schema / frame of reference for communication too. Low masculinity and high femininity index cultures are found in Nordic countries and Netherlands. (Hofstede) As far as India is concerned, I believe we are a high femininity index culture because (i) we are a she-country and (ii) we prefer negotiations to tough action.

Communication Teaching is part Management in the sense that the genre is actually Business Communication Management. Business Communication therefore involves a certain amount of power dynamics that plays an integral part of management.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions are also beneficial in helping to explain the social, cultural, political and economic factors which influence the power dynamics of interactions – both within cultures and between cultures. Searle (1969) pointed out that the social expectations and conventions which underlie communication, are critical to the interpretation of linguistic meaning in a given interaction. To understand power dynamics with reference to Business Communications, we need to first understand the interpretation of the word 'power' as used here. Brown and Levinson (1987:77) define 'power' as follows:

P (Power) is an asymmetric social dimension of relative power roughly in Weber's sense. That is, P is the degree to which the H (Hearer) can impose his/her own plans and self-evaluation (face) at the expense of the S (Speaker's) plans and self-evaluation'.

This concept of *power* is based on the Weberian perception in which power is seen to negatively influence other's behaviour or force people to perform acts which they wouldn't normally undertake themselves. One could paraphrase the Weberian concept of power in 2 simple ways; (a) dominance/influencing mass = power (b) motivating mass towards a certain goal = power. Searle (1969, 1995) and Foucault (1980), however argue that power relations exist as part of the social fabric of communication and should not be solely regarded as being the negative forces of domination by those in powerful positions (for eg. state, police etc) "... power comes from below; that is there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between the rulers and the ruled at the root of power relations' (Foucault 94). Foucault emphasises that *power* is not something that is imposed 'from above', but is created through people interacting in a certain social context. Giddens (1993) suggests that power is contextually determined. This validates my view of situational, albeit transient power, being an interpretation of 'power'.

Davidson (1986) takes a holistic approach to the meaning of power, insisting that power is '..... a netlike, circulating organization'. 'It exists within the fabric of language and not outside it ..... The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach can be said to include understanding and analyzing the influence of ideological loading in certain words and phrases in languages. CDA is applied when examining discourse for racist ideologies, discriminatory language or stereotyping in discourse. (Van Dijk 1987, Eades 2000, Teo 2000 ).

To conclude the discussion on communicative power dynamics, one may refer to Foucault (1980) again, (Bowe and Martin in 'Communication Across Cultures' Chapter 6.2) who provides a succinct summary of the study of the relationship between power and language : ' ... see .... how these mechanisms of power have been and continue to be - invested, colonised, utilised, involuted, transformed, displaced, extended etc, by evermore general mechanisms'.

Let us move from power dynamics to another criteria, also an aspect of power dynamics, for characterizing business communication – the problem of stereotyping. (Scollon & Scollon 2001) believe that stereotyping often involves overgeneralizations. It is often born out of a belief that any two cultures or social groups are polar opposites, while in truth, there is always a certain homogeneity that co-exists with basic heterogeneity or separateness between the two cultures in question.

A major deterrent to the process of successful business communication is achieving successful cross-cultural communication without falling prey to stereotyping. No individual member of a group encompasses or displays all of the characteristics of their parent group. Individuals belong to a variety of different groups and thus their identity and characteristics can be asserted differently depending on the situation. This is especially true for people who relate to

more than one ethnic or cultural group. In my opinion, therefore, far from stereotypical prototypes, individuals could actually, each be microcosms of the cultural and social diversity that is manifested in the world.

However, there are certain cultural differences that would only manifest itself in written communication, while being imperceptible in speech.

Linearity is a key principle of English written discourse. One idea leads to the next, one sentence to the next.

Nonlinear discourse and structures have certain typical features:

- Parallel constructions, in which, the first idea is completed in the second part (Semitic, Arabic etc) (Heather Bowe and Kylie Martin,2007).
- Circling organization / multiple perspectives approach ('indirection', in Kaplan's terms) in which the topic is looked at from a variety of different tangents, but never directly. (Oriental languages, for eg, Indonesian, Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean).
- Freedom to digress and to introduce 'extraneous' material. (Central European – German, Italian, Spanish, Latin- American) [Though less of French].
- Similar to the third point, but with different lengths, parenthetical amplifications of the subordinate elements and 'no rounding off' (Russian, Eastern European variant of 3<sup>rd</sup> point).

Command over cross-cultural communication is also imperative when faced with the task of interpreting text of a different language, or text translation. Interpreters are concerned with the spoken word. Best practices suggest that translators and interpreters should preferably translate into their mother tongue. This would also help with the socio-cultural blending of the communication's message. For instance, the English communicator's "How do you do?" would be best translated as "Greetings" in Mandarin.

'In many ways, the *emotional tone* of a passage is the key to the real communication ; conveying it honestly would test the communicative competence of the interpreter/translator, in the truest sense ..... for an effective (translation/ interpretation) transfer of the text, the translator must be well acquainted with both the source and the receptor language as well as its cultural schema. (Larson 1984). For best effects, it is required that the person in charge of the transfer of information be also, a consummate actor.

These instances elucidate the challenge that communication teaching in the 21<sup>st</sup> century faces. One would need to incorporate into communication, issues of overcoming miscommunication owing to culture gaps. Norm discrepancy will arise if the communicators cannot at least relate to each-others' frame of reference. In Indian classrooms, there is little, if any at all, effort to address this area of concern.

#### 4. PRESENT SCENARIO :

Recent developments in Business Communication Teaching have seen an increasing dependence of pedagogy on use of **Language Laboratories** to augment the teaching-learning process.

Extant since the 1980s in the IITs and other premier Engineering institutes of India, the primary purpose of a Language Laboratory was to impart correct training in diction, accent, pronunciation, to learners of non-vernacular/foreign languages, often including English. Other languages taught during those years included French, German etc. Used in IIT – Kharagpur since the early 1980s, the Language Laboratories had booths ensconced in glass wherein the learners would sit. They each had a computer monitor on their desks, so as to be able to read aloud the text selected by their teacher. This reading would perhaps be in synchronisation with their teachers', whose voice/ a native speaker's voice, would be played of reading together through their headphones. It would be a painstaking process of reading together, often with repetitions, in order to imbibe the correct intonation and accent.

The merits of this approach included training in speaking and listening components of language training, perhaps for the first time. Classroom teaching, so far, had less stress laid upon these components in comparison to writing and reading. Diction training is an important component of language teaching and the focus in these sessions in the Language Laboratory, were designed to do justice to just that, i.e. Language teaching. Learners immediately registered tremendous positive results.

However, this format had serious constraints in terms of teacher – learner interactions. Also, the glass booths gave the learners a sense of isolation. It was either a false comfort zone or a sense of being a discrete part of the whole- neither of which was the intention of the pedagogy. A learner was after all being thus trained so that s/he may confidently integrate into the professional world after course completion. The professional world is, as we know, unpredictable in terms of communicational dynamics.

## 5. MERITS OF THE LABORATORY AS OF TODAY:

The Language Laboratory today, therefore spans across three very distinct, albeit seamless, zones: *the teacher zone* – where the teacher controls the input (audio/video) and organizes the output (activities/tasks) of the teaching–learning process, *the simulation zone* – where the learners enact real-life simulations, and *the learner zone* which is used by students to watch, analyze and critique the performances of their peers, before descending to the simulation zone for their own tasks. The addition of computer aided communication studies has brought a new dimension to Business Communication Teaching in that resources are available from the internet, and live activity clips can be downloaded and put up on the projector screen for instant viewing and deliberations. The corporate styling of the Language Laboratory creates an effective ambience for inculcation of Soft Skills, an essential component of Business Communication. The merits of the simulation zone cannot be overstressed. It is here that role-plays, group discussions and mock Personal Interviews (PIs) are held. The learner exhibits what s/he has learnt in the Business Communication class. Kinesics, an integral part of Business Communication, actually leaps out of the lecture sessions and into the physical responses of the student. The video record and playback system help in generating auto correction and then peer correction, among learners. In this sense, teaching pedagogy used here is Total Physical Response.

‘Inclusive Pedagogy’ encapsulates the instructional approach that Verplaetse and Migliacci advocate. Used first in 2003 in ‘Multilingual Education in Practice: Diversity as a Resource’, in a chapter written by Shecter, Solomon and Kittner and edited by Schecter and Cummins. Excerpted from Chapter 1 of the book ‘*Inclusive Pedagogy*’ written by Lorrie Stoops Verplaetse and Naomi Migliacci (11)(Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, New York, 2008), Inclusive Pedagogy considers all learners to be resources in themselves in contrast to two other orientations that often shape educational approaches: language as a problem and language as a right (Ruiz 1988). It is by harnessing the multiple languages that the adult learner brings to class, that Communication teaching may be arrived at. Aida Walqui suggests(107) that adult learners, like the immigrant adolescents she talks of, ‘know a great deal about the world’. The resources of language and culture that insidiously creep into a diverse classroom by virtue of having a mixed ethnicity class, are to be utilized to scaffold their assimilation of the English language. Some of us teachers fail to tap into the existing reservoir of language in these young adults and continue to impart ‘the language’ in a transmission mode. What one can do instead, is what the Chinese have done. Take from the learners’, their own unique culture and merely convey it in the medium English. The linguistic as well as cultural subtractive effects may be damped. The teacher, here, becomes the archetypal fountain of knowledge.

Also, as Walqui suggests, ELLs (English Language Learners) have problems in class trying to make sense of decontextualized language (111). Complimentary course books in English (if any) with realia and simulations enrich and hasten the learning process. Dona J. Young’s ‘Foundations of Business Communication’. (Tata McGraw Hill.2006) is a case in point. Communication content in professional courses focus on language skills rather than language acquisition for its own sake. This system, therefore, often tests the students’ skills acquisition. Since the learner is often very intelligent and can answer quite satisfactorily at the tests, s/he passes without actually possessing the competence that her/his results exhibit. It is only if service-learning or mock classes are introduced will the English Language Learners (ELLs’) competence really be gauged. In an environment where the academic calendar is governed by the semester system (2 or more semesters/year) the ELLs have a predetermined mandate of exams to be taken in English, often before any true measure of proficiency in language acquisition has occurred. The ‘skills’ could however, be in place. And therefore, the Communication classes often end up in ‘skills development’ rather than ‘communication management’. Focussed effort is required to not only train for communicative competence, the learner should also be culturally mature and responsible. Connotations and context need to be well understood before one feels truly successful after a communication class, While different cultures are indeed to be cherished as rich resources, they should be filtered before being accepted as a corporate framework or advisory.

Some of the cultural challenges that need to be addressed while teaching Business Communication in India are along the lines of Choosing between Individualism and Collectivism, balancing Gender biases, teaching protocols for Turn – taking, teaching Sartorial Communication, Time Management and Confidence in voicing opinions.

These are some of the more relevant areas where teachers struggle to do justice to a Business Communication Class in India in the face of gender, hierarchical, societal biases prevalent in the hinterlands of nearly every state in India. In a situation where India is at a table with Western or East Asian counterparts: Greetings, Ice breakers, Turn Taking and Gender Issues continue to play out in the shadows. Most pronounced is the Socialist vs Capitalist frames of references and priorities. Tribute to and quasi obsession with, the (glorious) past is also something that makes the Asians different in their context, from the Westerners who are more interested in the here and now. A common path to the



future may be AI driven communication platforms like Chat GPT/LaMDA etc which have the capacity to humanise the connect homogeneously while blurring out nuances of geography and culture to a great extent.

## 6. INFLUENCE OF INTERNET ON ENGLISH AND SPECIFICALLY ON THE FUTURE OF COMMUNICATION :

It is often claimed that English dominates computers and the internet and those wishing to use either, must first learn English. In fact, English and the internet have long been considered the legs on which globalisation, modernity and jet age communication travel. While these may still be early days in the following prediction, that the next internet revolution will not be in English, statistics points towards a definite decline of the use of English as being the chosen language medium for the internet today(Graddol2006: 44).

Usage of Internet Languages 2022:

English	25.9%
Chinese	19.4%
Spanish	7.9%
Arabic	5.2%
Others	Rest

(<https://www.optimal.com/blog/top-10-popular-languages-used-internet/> accessed on 9th Sep 2022)

(An analysis published in Nov 2005 by Byte Level Research had concluded: ‘....data makes clear that the next internet revolution will not be in English’. So far one has not seen this happen.)

The use of the internet platforms encourage democratization of the flow of ideas indeed, however, graphics, visuals depicting the white, the yellow and the black, the distinctive morphic forms, the underlying westernization of ideas may rattle users of geographies. An image of the groom and the bride kissing on the wedding cake may call for myriad reactions and responses, not all welcome. Indeed, the depiction of women without headscarves, and at work in ‘menswear’ may evoke the same across many geographies. While it may not be politically correct to make these challenges part of academic discourses yet, they are the proverbial elephants in the room. The woman candidate is still required to ‘be presentable’ while being a wizard at her craft. Whereas the same standards may not apply to the other genders. Indeed, the narrative of gender fluidity and flexibility or freedom of such choices make many still uncomfortable.

Teaching Business Communication adroitly requires teachers to first be comfortable with these somewhat still radical thought processes themselves. Members of faculty who try and avoid these ‘difficult’ conversations, abound in every institution.

## 7. CONCLUSION:

Usually a module in the curriculum of Business Communication teaching, cross cultural communication is actually quite diverse and deep in its impact on communication as a whole and business communication in particular. Both the communicators in an exchange of information process are mired in their own schema. The classroom situation is the same. The cultural context of the teacher may or may not match the learner. In that case there is an inbuilt cross-cultural adaptation occurring right there. Global business transactions are more consistently fraught with contextual tensions. Understanding of cultural schemas of the communicatee/communicator is not always possible when the transaction is brief and fleeting. For instance, in a supermarket, at a hospital, or a cafeteria. When someone loquacious comes across someone crisp and business like, the interpretation could be of a lack in empathy or a lack of focus. In these situations, one is wont to desire an awareness in the service provider mostly, of the customers’ norms and codes so that the delivery of the service and its allied communication may be seamlessly appropriate. It is best if in classes on Business Communication Teaching, therefore, one creates interesting ice-breakers and activities that include sharing of experiences and expectations of appropriate behaviour, before one delves into the curriculum proper. Perhaps, on the lines of a trending video on LinkedIn that shows teachers of a primary school asking students to choose their preferred greeting via emoticons of sample greetings painted on the wall outside the classroom door.

Cross Cultural Communication takes on a new paradigm if we factor in the sentience of the AI. One then not only has to consider the cultural schema of the humans, diverse as they are, but also of the machines. The Cyber Physical Systems that are in use today will have very soon (if not already do) their own frames of references. Logic being predominant perhaps. With an apology to accusers of typecasting, the emotions of the Asians, the rich tapestry of cultural

baggage of the East Asians, the clinical precision and strict discipline of the Germanics and Scandinavians will then compete for space on the buffet of programmed logic of and/or, of the AI. There is no study yet on the cultural communicative challenges that factor in the AI, because it is supposedly and publicly, not sentient, therefore not being counted as a cultural entity. I Robot, notwithstanding, that time seems near.

For now, however, one hopes to be able to encourage geographies to be less distinctive and heterogenous, in terms of cultural codes so that world communication may ease. At the risk of being perceived as unempathetic and unpoetic, one hopes to have a more uniform communicative code that focuses on desired outcomes rather than the means to achieve it. Celebrating the uniqueness of and differences between cultures across the world makes the curricular focus of Business Communication interestingly diverse and diffused.

The internet platforms having been designed by the western world, champion their world view and context implicitly already. The way forward may be to embrace it as acceptable, disregard it as a corrupting influence or tweak it with explanations and disclaimers in class, Teachers will do well to not constrain themselves as context specific or culture specific. CELTA, DELTA, ELT and TESOL programs encourage the humble Communications teachers to travel and embrace different contexts and imbibe the best of all worlds so that they may curate their learners' experiences in class accordingly. It is certainly difficult, but never impossible to nurture world citizens in a Business Communications class. Virtual platforms of Communication, post Covid19, require nothing less.

## REFERENCES :

### Journal Papers:

1. Avruch, Kevin and Peter Black, "Conflict Resolution in Intercultural Settings: Problems and Prospects," in Conflict Resolution Theory and Practice: Integration and Application, edited by Dennis Sandole and Hugo van der Merwe. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993.
2. Ayers, Harry. An A to Z Practical Guide to Learning Difficulties. London: David Fulton. Publishers, 2006. Print.
3. Bowe, Heather and Kylie Martin. Communication across Cultures. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Print.
4. Bourke, James M. "Designing a topic-based Syllabus for Young Learners". ELTJournal. July 2006. Vol 60/3.279-286.
5. Bovee, Courtland, Thill and Schatzman. Business Communication Today. London: Pearson Education, 2006. Print.
6. Crystal, David. The Language Revolution. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004. Print.
7. Cronin, John J. "A Graduate Communication Course for an era of Global Commerce – a Case Study". Business Communication Quarterly. 1995. Vol 58/2. 32-39.
8. Davies, Paul with Eric Pearse. Success in English Teaching. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. Print.
9. Doughty, Catherine and Jessica Williams. Focus on Form in Classroom-Second Language Acquisition. Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1998. Print.
10. Ellis, Mark and Christine Johnson. Teaching Business English. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. Print.
11. Gardner, George H. Cross Cultural Communication. The Journal of Social Psychology. 2022.
12. Gradoll, David. English Next. UK, British Council. 2006.
13. Hofstede, Dr. Geert. Cultural Consequences. New Delhi, Sage 1980. 65-176.
- a) ..... "The Cultural Relativity of Organizational Practices and Theories". Journal of International Business Studies. 1983.
- b) ..... Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind. Tata McGraw Hill. 1991. Online publication Wiley 2006. Accessed on 24 th Oct 2012.
14. Howatt, A.P.R. with H.G. Widdowson. A History of English Language Teaching. Oxford University Press. Print.
15. Jennifer, R. Delecta and Dr G. Raman. Cross Cultural Communication Barriers in Workplace, *International Journal of Management*, Vol 6, Issue 1, Jan 2015
16. Kachru, Braj B. (Editor) The Other Tongue – English across Cultures. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.
17. Krishnaswamy, N. And Krishnaswamy Lalitha. The Story of English in India. New Delhi, Foundation Books. 2006.

18. Lesikar, Raymond V, Flatley, Rentz and Neerja Pande. Business Communications – Making connections in a Digital World. New Delhi, McGraw Hill. 2010.
19. McKay, Heather and Abigail Tom. Teaching Adult Second Language Learners. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print.
20. Nunan, David. Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom. Cambridge University Press, 1989. Print.
21. Phillipson, Robert. Linguistic Imperialism. New Delhi, Oxford University Press 2007.
22. Richards, Jack C. and Theodore S. Rodgers. Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print.
23. Scharle, Agota and Anita Szabo. Learner Autonomy. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. 2000.
- c) 22. Smith, Larry. English for Cross Cultural Communication. Springer. The Macmillan Press. 1981
24. Tannen, Deborah. Cross-cultural Communication. ERIC number ED253061, 1983
25. Ur, Penny. A Course in Language Teaching. Cambridge Teacher Training and Development. Cape Town: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Print.
26. Verplaetse, Lorrie Stoops and Naomi Migliacci (Editors). Inclusive Pedagogy for English Language Learners. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2008
27. Wright, Tony. Roles of Teachers and Learners. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991. Print

#### Web References:

28. Babcock, Bertha Du. “Perspectives on Teaching Cross Cultural Business Communication”. (www.uri.edu/iaics/content pdf) 24th Oct 2012.
29. Conaway, Roger and Thomas I Fernandez. “Ethical preferences among Business Leaders – their implications for Business Schools”. Business Communication Quarterly Vol 63/1. Mar 2000. (23-28). Accessed on 27 th Oct 2012.
30. Forman, Janis. UCLA. “Educating European Corporate Communication Professionals for Senior Management Positions”. BCQ Vol 68/2. Jun 2005. [DOI 10.1177/108056990527 6554] (209-221). ( Accessed on 29th Oct 2012)
31. Foucault. “Internet Encyclopaedia of Philosophy” (1980:99) Wikipedia. 24 th Oct 2012.
32. “Gender Communication” candy@tymson.com.au (www.tymson.com.au/#61294132900) 24th Oct 2012.
33. Kapadia, Parmita. “Bastardizing the Bard: Appropriations of Shakespeare’s Plays in Post- Colonial India”. Electronic Doctoral Dissertation for US Mass Amherst Paper AA19737547. http://scholarworks.Umass.edu/dissertations AA19737547. 10 Aug 2012. Web.
34. Kitzing, J. “Focus Groups”. (Article summary). British Medical Journal, 311:299-302, 29TH July 1995. (Accessed on 29th Oct 2012).
35. Nasscom Data on Employability of Graduates. http://www.google.co.in. 27<sup>th</sup> Jan 2009
36. Jameson, Daphne A. (Cornell University). “Reconceptualising cultural identity and its role in Intercultural Business Communication”. Journal for Business Communication. Vol 44/3. July 2007. (199-235). Copyright Association for Business Communication [DOI 10.1177/0021943607301346] Accessed on 29th Oct 2012.

#### Recent accessions:

- <https://www.pbs.org/ampu/crosscult.html> accessed on 13 th Sep 2022
- <https://youtu.be/YMyofREc5Jk> accessed on 13 th Sep 2022
- <https://www.northeastern.edu/graduate/blog/cross-cultural-communication/> accessed on 13 th Sep 2022
- <https://www.google.com/search?q=cross+cultural+communication&aq=chrome.1.69i57j0i131i433i512j0i512j46i433i512j0i512i5.9305j0j16&client=ms-android-samsung-gj-rev1&sourceid=chrome-mobile&ie=UTF-8> accessed on 13 th Sep 2022
- <http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in> (25<sup>th</sup> November, 2016)
- <https://www.communicationtheory.org/cross-cultural-communication/> 20-12-22
- [scoopkiller.com/management-materials/human-resources-management/cross-culture-management/](https://scoopkiller.com/management-materials/human-resources-management/cross-culture-management/) Jul6th 2018