Linking Intercultural Communication, Intercultural Communication Apprehension and Intercultural Sensitivity with Ethnocentrism

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Abstract

Todays' organization are changing the face of their business by extending beyond the national boundaries. Clear and effective communication among people from different cultures is the real challenge imposed before the organizations. Enterprises being cultural aware helps them to understand how to behave in cross-cultural international markets. It is often recognized that cross-cultural issues acts as invisible communication barriers more specifically in international business. Thus, understanding the cultural differences among people is one of the most significant skills for firms to develop in order to have a competitive advantage in international business. The aim of this study is to see whether there is a connection between ethnocentrism, intercultural communication, intercultural communication apprehension, and intercultural sensitivity. Since intercultural sensitivity is just one of the intercultural communication skill dimensions, potential studies should focus on the influence of the other dimensions, such as intercultural understanding and intercultural efficacy

Introduction

Today people engage with each other more internationally than they did in the previous century. As a result, as the number of intercultural encounters has grown, so has the need to consider intercultural communication. The cultural gap among the participants is one of the most significant challenges in intercultural communication; when they come from various cultures, they have different traditions, principles, attitudes, and ways of life, so when they interact with someone from a different culture, they may experience cultural shock and inconsistencies, which can obstruct smooth communication. About the fact that people all over the world need to be linked and interacted, the need to understand intercultural communication, its goal, purpose, obstacles, and competence is becoming increasingly important day by day. When we learn of intercultural relations, several questions arise, such as whether we will be able to fully appreciate anyone from a different cultural context, and whether we will be able to check our ethnocentrism and perceptions of different people around the world while dealing with someone from a different cultural background. Ethnocentrism and intercultural communication are among them. The aim of

this study is to see whether there is a connection between ethnocentrism, intercultural communication, intercultural communication apprehension and intercultural sensitivity.

Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication was not a widely explored and argued phenomenon until the mid-twentieth century. While it existed and was observed, it was mostly ignored or dismissed by scientific disciplines for failing to meet their defined standards. Thus, despite the fact that intercultural contact has been accepted as a true conventional academic discipline for a long time, it is nevertheless seen as an interface framework or as an area of study and expertise with ambiguous and loose contours. Though the discipline integrates and is aligned with a variety of scientific ideas rooted in communication studies, philosophy, sociology, semantics, semiotics, linguistics, rhetoric, cognitive science, psychology, and media studies, among others. Scholars from a number of fields, including Communication Studies, Education, and Psychology, have stressed the relevance of intercultural communication and sensitivity on ethnocentrism.

Intercultural Communication Apprehension

Fear or anxiety associated with actual or expected contact with people from different backgrounds, especially different cultural or ethnic groups, is referred to as intercultural communication apprehension (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). According to Berger and Calabrese (1975), the absence of knowledge regarding one another during initial encounters increases interpersonal confusion or misunderstanding, which causes the individuals to feel anxious or apprehensive. Because of the novelty and unfamiliarity created by cultural differences, the degree of ambiguity in intercultural communication is particularly strong (Gudykunst, 1995). In an intercultural setting, fear in an ambiguous environment typically jeopardises successful contact (Gudykunst, 2005; Kassing, 1997; Kim, 1988). In both intracultural and intercultural settings, communication apprehension was found to be one of the strongest predictors of ability to speak (Lin & Rancer, 2003; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987, 1991). Individuals that became more apprehensive were less likely to share information in intercultural interactions and were thus less prepared to respond to a new cultural setting (Gudykunst & Nishida, 2001; Neuliep & Ryan, 1998; Tominaga, Gudykunst, & Ota, 2003). All of these studies suggest that anxiety about intercultural contact has a detrimental association with intercultural communication ability or efficacy.

Intercultural Sensitivity

Scholars from a number of fields, including Communication Studies, Education, and Psychology, have stressed the value of intercultural awareness. Intercultural sensitivity is needed for effective and fruitful contact between people from different cultural backgrounds, according to the majority of experts (Chen & Starosta, 1997; Graf, 2004; Moran, Harris, & Moran, 2007; Olson &Kroeger, 2001; Rosen, Digh, Siinger, & Phillips, 2000). Globalization, according to Chen (2005), has taken citizens of various races, ethnicities, geographies, and faiths together in every field of

contemporary human existence owing to the exponential growth of information and transportation technologies. Being culturally aware is a necessary skill for reducing ethnocentrism and parochialism, as well as being skilled in intercultural or multicultural experiences. The aim of this research is to look at the connection between intercultural awareness, ethnocentrism, and intercultural communication anxiety. 'An individual's capacity to cultivate emotion toward recognising and appreciating cultural differences that facilitates acceptable and successful action in intercultural communication' is how intercultural awareness is characterised (Chen & Starosta, 1997). The definition was viewed as one of the intercultural contact maturity dimensions. Intercultural communication capacity is divided into three categories: cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills. Intercultural knowledge represents the cognitive skill, intercultural empathy represents the affective ability, and intercultural efficacy or adroitness represents the behavioural ability (Chen, 2009; Chen & Starosta, 1996, 2003, 2005; Hammer, 1989).

Intercultural awareness produces optimistic emotional reactions that invariably reflect an individual's ability to not only understand and accept cultural distinctions, but also to value and admire them during intercultural contact (Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992; Chen, 2005). In other terms, developing intercultural awareness entails a lack of ethnocentrism and parochialism, which is a necessary component for promoting good global citizenship on both a person and organisational level (Adler, 2008; Thorn, 2002). Intercultural awareness, according to Chen and Starosta (2000), is one of the most important factors in intercultural communication. It is made up of five abilities: (a) interaction commitment, (b) appreciation for cultural distinctions, (c) interaction trust, (d) interaction enjoyment, and (e) interaction attentiveness. Individuals with high intercultural awareness, according to Chen and Starosta (2000), are more attentive, more likely to interpret socio-interpersonal relationships in order to change their attitudes, have high self-esteem and self-monitoring, are more empathic, and are more successful in intercultural interaction.

Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism is defined as the belief that one's own culture and way of life are superior to everyone else's (Schaefer, 2002:69). Ethnocentrism can be beneficial to societies by encouraging people to conform to societal norms and values and promoting group solidarity and loyalty. It can, however, be problematic and harmful to societies. When ethnocentrism blinds cultures to what other cultural groups have to offer, or when it leads to conflict and hostility, it is counterproductive. When ethnocentrism contributes to social alienation, bigotry, inequality, and injustice of one group by another, it may be an issue across culture (Kendall, 2001:91).

Although ethnocentrism can produce positive outcomes such as patriotism and willingness to compromise for one's own race, its negative effects are evident in intercultural communication, according to Lin and Rancer (2003), since people with a high degree of ethnocentrism misperceive people from other groups and misunderstand their attitudes. Furthermore, a higher level of ethnocentrism causes social isolation in interactions between citizens of various cultures, making cross-cultural contact ineffective (Gudykunst & Kim, 2002; Lukens, 1978).

Ethnocentrism is therefore closely linked to the development of an individual's personality. Identity's relationship to ethnocentrism as it applies to multicultural problems was examined by Kim, Kim, and Choe (2006). In contrast to Japanese and native English speakers, Koreans became more ethnocentric, according to Kim et al. In terms of identity, Koreans came out on top. Intercultural communication awareness, according to Chen and Starosta (2000), is a requirement for intercultural communication competence. When one's exposure to intercultural contact grows, so does one's ability to communicate through cultures. As a result, ethnocentrism may be considered a 'barrier to intercultural communication competence.' (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997).

Conclusion

The effect of intercultural sensitivity on ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension was explored in this research. People with a higher level of intercultural awareness were less ethnocentric and apprehensive in intercultural interactions, according to the findings. The feature of intercultural awareness is reflected in the factor of intercultural interaction, which relates to participants' pleasure and happiness in engaging with people from other cultures with an open mind and the capacity to react favourably to their counterparts' messages. Ethnocentrism teaches people to form strong bonds with their peers and to be 'proud of their own heritages by subjectively utilising their cultural values as guidelines for intercultural exchange perceptions and decisions' (Chen & Starosta, 2005). A certain level of ethnocentrism from a culture's representatives is required for survival; however, as ethnocentrism reaches a certain level, it becomes a barrier to contact between people of different cultures (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). Ethnocentrism causes people to see life from the lens of their own race, and may contribute to racism by treating other classes as inferior to their own (Graen & Wakabayashi, 1994). The findings emphasised the value of intercultural awareness as a crucial component for people to be effective of intercultural communication, in which utilising one's cultural norms as guidelines for meanings and decisions is discouraged, as is communication anxiety. Intercultural interaction was also shown to be the best predictor of lack of ethnocentrism, whereas appreciation for cultural diversity and intercultural satisfaction were found to be the best predictors of lack of intercultural contact apprehension.

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