Course: Intercultural Communication

Field of study: Global Communication/Modern languages

Number of hours: theory 15-30 h, practice 15 h

Number of ECTS credits: 5

Teaching methods: Lectures, assignments, exercises, case study, presentation, group discussion

Learning outcomes:

After completing the course, students will be able to:
- Understand the importance of intercultural communication.
- Define and describe the role of intercultural communication for successful negotiations.
- Understand the concept of culture and co-culture with explanation of cultural identity.
- Make socio-political judgements in international settings.
- Understand cross cultural experience 'case study' and explore the psycho-cultural dimension in an international environment.
- Enhance communication skills – in the area of both sending and receiving abilities that determine the acquisition and application of knowledge in order to understand problems arising in international dialogue
- Communication strives to achieve a joint decision or outcome satisfactory to both parties.
- Communication as such, the most effective form of negotiation as a problem solving approach.

The method for verifying learning outcomes (100%):
- Class Attendance & Active Participation (20%),
- Assignments (10%),
- Case Studies (10%),
- Student Presentation individual/groups (20%),
- Written Examination: objective types, short and long type questions (40%).

Note: *For passing the course written examination is compulsory even if the overall score for the course is 60% without examination.*

Sources

Basic literature on the subject

Judith N. M., Nakayama T. K., *Intercultural Communication in Contexts*. McGraw Hill, Higher Education, New York, USA, 2010.

Fisher G., *Mindset: the Role of Culture and Perception in International Relations*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2nd edition, Boston, USA, 1997.

Curtin A. P., Gaither K. T., '*International Public Relations' Negotiating Culture, Identity, and Power*. Sage Publications, Inc, USA, 2007.

Jongsuk Ch., *Culture and International Relations: Negotiating Culture, Identity, and Power*. Praeger Publishers, New York, 1990.

Intercultural Communication

Guillaume Xavier, *'International Relations and Identity' a dialogical approach*. Routledge, New York, USA, 2011.

List of websites

https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/id/b4cc2a3d-3fa5-4529-a2d0-424d0c46f6ae/1000245.pdf

https://www.press.umich.edu/pdf/9780472033577-ch1.pdf

https://www.academia.edu/37454331/INTERCULTURAL_COMMUNICATION_in_Contexts

https://sites.google.com/a/books-now.com/en1953/9780199739790-85resoGEconsboe53

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1. Introduction

This course is designed to enhance students' understanding of multicultural societies and its importance for intercultural communication. It also offers an overview of socio-scientific approaches towards cultural understanding, and psychological reasoning by providing knowledge on the mindset of people through a cultural lens that enables one to perform an analysis of the cultural identity, and spirituality in terms of the use of communication language. During communication, the selection of words reflects the culture of its participants because that is where they have learned them, and that is where they originated. It is also important to understand the values and expression of cultural concepts from a psychological and spiritual point of view in order to increase cross-cultural communication. It includes basic concepts of spirituality and its importance for intercultural communication such as Buddhist Economics, Islamic Civics, Confucian Marxism, Hindu Constructivism, Pagan Feminism, and Animist Environmentalism, etc. Culture, Communication, and Intercultural Relationship have been presented as tools for conflict solving mechanisms. Cultural considerations play an important role in the negotiation process as all of its actors bring with them their own specific cultural behaviours; that is their patterns of thinking, feeling, acting, and most importantly, their own set of culturally shared values.

2. Why Study Intercultural Communication?

Intercultural communication consists of skills that are learned by individuals and shared within organisations and communities. Its focus is not limited to communication or successful negotiation, it is also about knowing, understanding and being able to send and receive messages that determines how well individuals, organisations, industries and nations do in both acquiring and applying knowledge using national and international platforms. Communication could not be established by one person talking or someone who has his/her own view on a matter and sending the same but it also matters that is depending on how much other party is receiving. And at the same time when the other person is sending his/her message, it is essential how much we understand and take from their approach. The better the communication, the greater likelihood of success.

Due to globalisation the importance of information has grown rapidly, which gives rise to a new category known as a knowledge class, i.e. the class of people who have the ability to effectively negotiate in different cultural environments. For productive communication and successful negotiations, as much as they require one to have a good understanding of the cross-cultural environment, occur when one has a sufficient skill and ability needed in that communication/negotiation process. Such an environment is beneficial for all of us, whether it is our college campus, exchange programmes or cooperation with multinational companies. People with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds are considered to perform better in intercultural communication or cross-border communication.

Today, when outsourcing is increasingly appreciated around the globe, multinational companies or firms from developed nations are outsourcing their projects with developing nations which is supporting them to organise the same work at low cost, e.g., American law firms are hiring law graduates or lawyers from India. If the same law firm is supposed to hire a lawyer from the USA, they must pay much higher rate (for example $100 per hour), but were it to hire a law graduate or a lawyer from India, then it would need to pay only $7 per hour, and considering the fact that the same law practices apply to both the USA and India (common law legal system), it is more beneficial for law firms to get their projects done by outsourcing to India. What is more – due to the time

difference between India and the USA, it allows them to work around the clock (when a law firm is closing its office in the USA, it sends the required task to the Indian associates, and when it opens its office on the next day, it has all its projects ready, as the closing time in the USA is 6:00 pm , which is 6:00 am in India).

3. Understanding of Culture and Co-culture

Culture can be understood as a set of learned behaviours of an individual since his/her birth/childhood. Culture is a concept that is living part of an individual reflecting his/her learned, socially acquired traditions, norms and lifestyles. It can be defined as an amalgamation of the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldviews created and shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors, which can include a common history, geographic location, language, social class and/or religion.

Culture is playing a very significant role in our lives because it is a part of us. This includes our patterned way of thinking, feeling, and acting. It is also reflected through our communication, behaviour and approaches.

- *What is the meaning of Cultural Being? How to establish whether someone's behaviour is cultural in comparison to others? What is cultural identity?*

Cultural identity, composed of ethnicity, culture, gender, age, life stage, beliefs, values, and assumptions, is the degree to which someone identifies with his/her culture, and it is determined by the values he/she supports. If someone is born and raised in Poland, his/her cultural identity involves the degree to which he/she identifies as a Polish person. But this does not stop there. He/she has a number of cultural identities – he/she is associated with regional groups, a student body, alumni of a particular school or college, a particular race, a specific age group, a religion, and so on. But at the same time, specific patterns of behaviour that distinguish him/her from other groups within a culture can be identified as co-culture, e.g., foreign migrants, women, people with disabilities, homosexuals, etc.

The following needs to be remembered in order to understand a cultural identity:
A. *Cultural identities are learned:* the way of thinking, acting, and feeling are learned from family, friends and communities.
B. *Cultural identities vary in strength:* cultural identity is prominent depending on the situation. Some people are associated with their groups and their values more closely which creates spaces for conversation.
C. *It varies in terms of its content:* for example, not everyone would be able to define what it means to be a Pole in the same way, just as students have different ways of defining what it means to be a student. The importance of such questions becomes evident when we begin to talk about someone's culture in general. In the aforementioned case, the values of constitutional freedom, human rights, social recognition, income standard, language, high respect to the women, etc., are the values often ascribed to the members of the Polish culture. What if you were an African-Polish person and you identified culturally with both of them?

4. Identity, Culture, and Technology

Today we live in a global village, advances in communication technology lead us to think differently about ourselves and our identity. Technology plays a huge role in our everyday life. We cannot

imagine not being connected to the Internet and not using mobile phones. With each new day, we are becoming increasingly dependent on technology, which also increases the understanding of different identities and technology management in life style.

According to psychologist Kenneth Gergen, 'the changes that occur as technology alters our patterns of communication'. He also suggests that with the removal of traditional barriers to forming relationships – that of time and space, these technological advancements lead to multiphrenia, i.e. a condition in which an individual becomes split into many different selves. We are available for communication, via answering machine, fax, and e-mail, even when we are not physically present.

Cultural differences have been seen by using identities in communication with others for different age groups, ethnicity, gender, etc., which could not be hidden. But when we send an e-mail or communicate visually, we can choose whether to reveal certain aspects of our identities or not. Therefore, our identity on the internet not only is potentially fragmented but also involves more choice and management issues than in the case of face-to-face interactions.

Identities or cultural issues involve responsibilities that come with acquisition of intercultural knowledge, use of technology, that is not only for transformative purposes for an individual but should also benefit the society at large and other cultural groups.

5. Intercultural Communication in Global Business

The modern business world is interconnected more than ever due to advancements made in technology. While international business has been conducted since the dawn of civilisation, globalisation aided by digitalisation has made it much quicker, efficient and sustainable. The diversification of the consumer market added the need to expand businesses into all parts of the globe. Developing countries now have regular commerce contacts with leaders of the global economy, and vice versa. Establishing a viable business relationship between two or more nations is in itself a complex procedure, but one which can potentially benefit both parties. A one aspect of this process is the nations' ability to agree upon certain agreements; this can be narrowed down to how individuals from different cultural backgrounds communicate with one another.

Due to the ease of travel, communication, and availability of information, people from one end of the globe can quickly establish contact with individuals from another. Nothing really stands in the way for a businessman from Tokyo to arrange a business meeting with a company that is based in Poland. The possibility to amass capital in international commerce is simple, but what about two completely different people from vastly separate cultures communicating with one another – is it that simple, though? When it comes down to language, the lingua franca of global business is English, and it is expected of most people in commerce, especially higher ranking employees (executives, chief officers, managers, etc.), to speak English in a communicative way.

Lack of intercultural knowledge and integrity, failure to interact successfully at the global level, and unwillingness to implement appropriate marks in market negotiations has been a problem, and solutions on how to overcome it have been developing. Enterprises from various nations ought to not only realise the significance of recognising their counterparts' cultures and beliefs, but also improve intercultural contact awareness. Poland is no exception in this matter. After the fall of communism, Poland's economy became open to international trade, and so came business contacts that it had not had before. Just like with other countries that emerged from the eastern side of the Iron Curtain, Poland struggled, but made progress and developed new opportunities through adapting intercultural communication in global business.

Cultures have varying approaches to their reality: to rules, standards, dress codes, interpersonal interactions. For example, a person from an individualistic country like the USA might be at odds with a man from China. Americans highly regard personal freedom and individual expression, whereas in China people tend to think about the common good when performing tasks. Knowing these differences is crucial to find a mutual ground where cooperation can be built.

On the other hand, there are certain cultures that have little differences between them. This could be tied to a shared historical past, common religion, similar customs, e.g.: the Scandinavian countries are close together because of their Norse roots, centuries of co-rulers and a religion that is prevalent in all Nordic countries (Lutheran Christianity). These factors helped influence the current socio-economic background, where the people of Norway, Denmark and Sweden are social democrats with welfare states; the wealth their nations accumulate must benefit the common, less-fortunate folk. Also, there are gestures, ways of speaking, symbols, ethics, etc. that are not bound by national borders. Putting your feet up on the desk, for example, would be frowned upon with the same level of disdain in France as it would in Indonesia. It is as important to find these commonalities as it is to find what separates us. Analysing both and drawing the right conclusions is the cornerstone of intercultural communication.

6. Understanding of Identity, Language, and Spirituality in Intercultural Communication

Spirituality is the connection with God, religious sentiment, understanding of self, humanity, nature or the universe. Spirituality can be summarised as a sense of being connected to something greater than yourself. Spirituality can be, and should be, a large part of one's religious experience. It can refer to one's self exploration through meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

- *Secular spirituality:* in general, spirituality was solely connected with the sphere of religion, but now, due to the popularisation of secularism, secular spirituality was formed. It is a cultural phenomenon which focuses on spiritual ideology without any religious framework. It is based on practice rather than belief.

Spirituality and its beliefs are based on practices, language and effects that impact an individual as well as the larger society. It defines different philosophical groups/religious practices as follows:
- Buddhist Economics,
- Islamic Civics,
- Confucian Marxism,
- Hindu Constructivism,
- Pagan Feminism,
- Animist Environmentalism.

7. Culture, Communication, and Intercultural Relationship

Research shows that deal-making across cultures tends to lead to worse outcomes as compared to communicating within the same culture. This is primarily because cultures are characterised by different behaviours, communication styles, and norms. As a result, when communicating with people of different cultures, we bring different perspectives to the discussion, which in turn may result in potential misunderstandings and a lower likelihood of exporting and discovering integrative, or valuable solutions.

Cultural conflict in communication tend to occur for two main reasons:

A. *Relying on stereotypes:* stereotyping is the tendency to place every single person in a fixed and known category. Stereotypes are often judgmental, and they can lead to distorted expectations about your counterpart's behaviour as well as potentially costly misinterprettations.

B. *Interpretation of other's behaviour and value system:* cross cultural misunderstandings occur as we tend to interpret others' behaviours, values, and beliefs through the lens of our own culture. To overcome this tendency, we need to learn about the other party's culture. This means not only researching the customs and behaviours of different cultures, but also understanding why people follow these customs and exhibit these behaviours in the first place.

To understand the importance of differences in culture and their values, it is essential to follow Hofstede's model of national culture consisting of six dimensions:

Dimension	Meaning	Low Degree	High Degree
Power distance	The degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally	Power is shared and is widely dispersed, and that society members do not accept situations where power is distributed unequally	Society accepts an unequal, hierarchical distribution of power, and that people understand their place in the system
Individualism v/s Collectivism	Refers to the strength of the ties that people have to others within their community	Low collectivism, people are supposed to be loyal to the group to which they belong, and in exchange, the group will defend their interest	High collectivism score indicates weak interpersonal connection among those who are not part of a core family
Masculinity v/s Femininity	Distribution of roles between men and women	Low masculinity, i.e. femininity indicates that there is a great deal of overlap between male and female roles, and modesty is perceived as a virtue	High masculinity indicates the roles of men and women overlap is less, and men are expected to behave assertively
Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)	Describes how well people can cope with anxiety	Low UAE scoring countries are more relaxed, open or inclusive	People attempt to make life as predictable and controllable as possible, if they find that they cannot control their own lives, they may be tempted to stop trying

Long-Term v/s Short-Term Orientation	Focus towards past, present, and future	Short term orientation prefers to maintain time-honoured traditions and norms while viewing societal change with suspicion	Long-term orientation countries are pragmatic, modest, long-term oriented, and more thrifty
Indulgence v/s Restraint (IVR)	Focus on freedom against following rules	Low IVR score – more emphasis is placed on suppressing satisfaction as well as regulating people's conduct and behaviour; in addition, social norms are stricter	High IVR score – relatively free fulfilment of people's own drives and emotions, such as enjoying life and having fun, is allowed and encouraged

8. Coping with Culture in International Environment

Communication in the international environment is a huge challenge for any individual or organisation. How do we cope with the cultural differences? What approach is more efficient and proper when dealing with Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Americans, Germans, Russians or Poles? The following constitute some of the guidelines that might be helpful for understanding and communicating in international environment:

A. *Learn the other side's culture.*
B. *Do not stereotype.*
C. *Find ways to bridge the cultural gap.*

Cross cultural communication in the international environment is more complicated than the one conducted among individuals or companies in the same countries. Differences in legal structure, cultural norms and religious observances are the factors which affect communication or bring complications that may hinder effective negotiations. Understanding cultural differences across borders can aid businesses in achieving success on a global scale. The following are some of the factors:

- attitude towards risk,
- government-business relations,
- communication style,
- corporate structure,
- political and legal pluralism,
- i*nternational economics,*
- foreign governments and bureaucracies,
- instability,
- ideology,
- culture,
- external stakeholders.

Communication is an important and valuable tool for resolving conflict when all parties involved have a shared commitment to reaching a collaborative, joint outcome that satisfies both parties' needs and interests.

9. Assignments & Group Presentations

Students will be assigned to prepare case studies and class presentations with powerpoint presentations. They will be working both individually and in small groups. After collecting data and making short surveys based on their study cases, they will present their research, results and conclusions.

10. Review for Final Exam

The entirety of the course will be revised to recall all the topics and keep students updated with the covered subject materials.

11. Sample Questions

I. Objective Types

A. Multiple choice questions:
Q. What do we call the ever-changing values, traditions, social and political relationships, and worldview created and shared by a group of people bound together by a combination of factors?
a). Religion   b). Conflict   c). Culture   d). Spirituality

II. Questions requiring short answers

• Why is the understanding of intercultural communication so important in today's globalised world?

• What is culture? Explain this concept in brief with range of contexts of negotiation.

• How do you understand the meaning of culture and negotiation? Define them and their importance for successful negotiation.

• Present your arguments to prove that negotiation is a relationship-establishing and building process?

• What has been the historical relationship of Mexico and the USA, and how does it affect their friendship?

• What is social structure? Explain the concept that formalised banking practices of Islamic financial institutions.

III. Questions requiring long answers

• Define culture and its importance in an intercultural environment?

• How do you understand the meaning of cultural wheel? Explain it briefly.

• How do you understand the meaning of communication and its role in achieving successful negotiation in the case of intercultural communication?

• How will you establish communication and what specific strategies will you use when responding to a conflict in international cultural environment?

• Define culture and co-culture as well as what it means to possess a cultural identity.

- Describe how technology can impact intercultural interaction.

- Define and explain the importance of intercultural communication.

- Describe the role intercultural communication plays in communicating effectively.

- Explain how studying intercultural communication can lead to increased self-understanding.

- Why is it important to think beyond ourselves as individuals in intercultural interaction?

- In what way do electronic means of communication (e-mail, the Internet, fax, and so on) differ from face-to-face interactions?

- What is conflict? Define it and explain its nature.

- What is industrial/organisational conflict? Define and provide its causes.

- Why is the conflict between the USA and North Korea a type of dysfunctional conflict. Explain in your words.

- Describe any challenges that you had to overcome when attempting to communicate. If there were no challenges, explain why you think it was so easy.

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