COMMUNICATION IN THE WORKPLACE:
A CASE ANALYSIS FROM INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

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Introduction

Relevance: Communication is a linchpin for organizing effective work in an institution or company. Therefore, communication impacts organization's effective work processes that ensure organizations' sustainability.

Research problem: Modern organizations are multicultural as their staff members represent a variety of cultures. Even staff members of the same country but from different regions or areas are considered to be representatives from different cultures. Communication from a staff member with one cultural background might be misinterpreted by a staff member who represents another culture. This misinterpretation between staff members from two different cultures can delay mutual understanding for the effective implementation of their job responsibilities.

Aim: The research intended to analyse the impact of different intercultural perspectives on communication problem solving, underpinning the formulation of guidelines for staff members from multicultural organizations.

Tasks:
1. To analyse scientific literature on communication and impact of culture on communication
2. To create a framework on communication in multicultural organizations
3. To carry out an empirical study
4. To drawn the conclusions

Research methodology: Exploratory research was deployed as the issue of communication in multicultural organizations is under-explored. The research was implemented in the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm is aimed at analyzing the social construction of the meaningful reality. Meanings emerge from the interpretation. The researcher is the interpreter. The exploratory research was implemented in three phases: Exploration of theory on communication in multicultural organizations in Phase 1, Analysis of theoretical and empirical results in Phase 2, and Formulation of a new research questions in Phase 3.

Theoretical assumptions

Previous understanding of communication:

The communication process is conventionally described like that: "The sender receives a stimulus and encodes a message for the receiver. The receiver interprets the message and returns feedback to the first point" (Llopis-Lorente, Díez, Sánchez, Marcos, Sancenón, Martínez-Ruiz, Villalonga, & Martínez-Máñez, 2017, p. 3). According to these researchers (Llopis-Lorente, Díez, Sánchez, Marcos, Sancenón, Martínez-Ruiz, Villalonga, & Martínez-Máñez, 2017), afterwards, the sender and the receiver change their roles, and the cycle starts from the beginning.
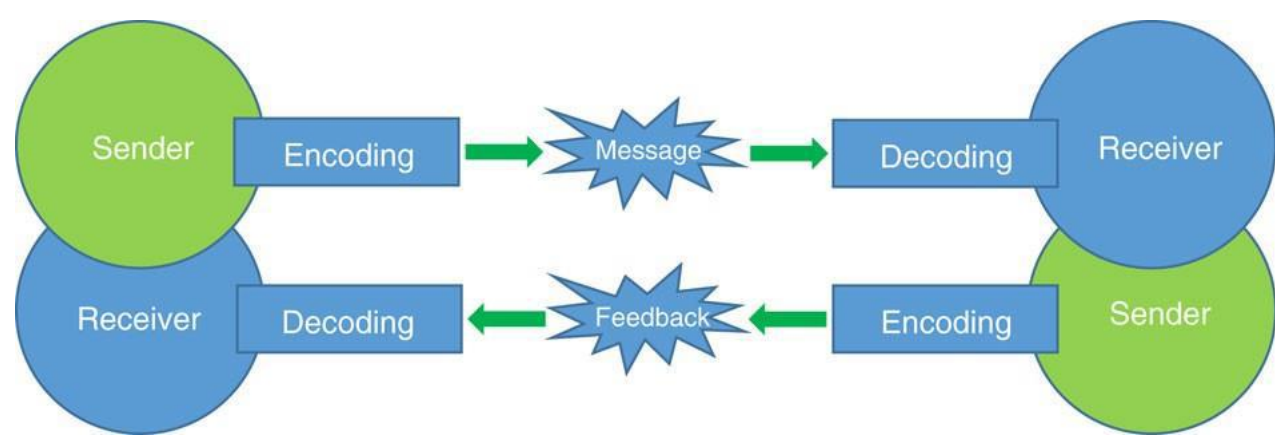

Figure 1. **Interactive model of communication** (Llopis-Lorente, Díez, Sánchez, Marcos, Sancenón, Martínez-Ruiz, Villalonga, & Martínez-Máñez, 2017)

Modern understanding of communication:

The communication process is not the information exchange, as it is widely accepted, but information interaction. It means that any information is not transferred in one way, namely from the sender to the receiver. Opposite, the sender and the receiver communicate with each other at the same time, their information meets and exchanges, thereby promoting information interaction or quasi-knowledge creation. These individuals' information meets, interacts, and enriches each other, thereby contributing to the creation of new knowledge.
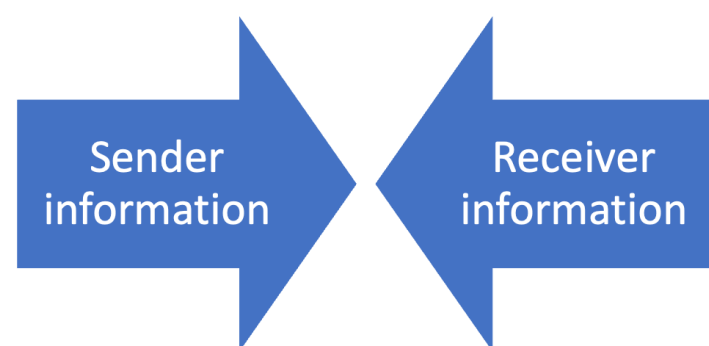

Figure 2. **The relationships between the sender and received information in the process of communications** (Ahrens, Zascerinska, Bikova, Aleksejeva, Zascerinskis, & Gukovica, 2023)

Research results

The significant **communication challenges in multicultural organisations** are (Hussain, 2018):
- language barrier,
- stereotyping,
- ethnocentrism,
- cultural relativism,
- cultural shock,
- attitude toward conflict resolution,
- task completion,
- decision making,
- privacy,
- trust building, and
- non-verbal language.

Communication is (Ahrens, Zaščerinska, Lange, & Aļeksejeva, 2021)
- a cyclic process as it can be repeated,
- of social nature as it changes within and by society,
- of bi-module nature as it includes both external (society) and internal (individual) perspectives.

Empirical study results

Purpose of the study: to to analyse a case from the intercultural perspectives
Respondents: Latvia, France, Azerbaijan, India, and Pakistan.
The study was carried out in October 2024.
Method of data collection: focus group interview
The case description: The organization's employees decided to make changes in their work. To implement changes, it is necessary to effectively build organizational communication, clearly distributing roles and setting priorities in order to achieve the goal on time. Respondents are asked to identify communication problems in the organization and offer ideas for an effective solution to the problem.

Respondents' assumptions on communication problems in multicultural organizations: 1.Not explaining the purpose and priorities properly. 2.Not asking questions. 3.Having preconceived ideas. 4.Not understanding the real problem and where the project is headed. 5.Jumping to conclusions. 6.Not considering alternatives.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Understanding of communication nature is changing from information exchange to information interaction.

Information interaction in the communication process links the internal (individual) and external (social) information.

The communication process is becoming more complicated as it changes within and by society. Organisations being focused on a specific social activity (education, market, industry, tourism etc) can be represented by individuals from different cultures. Therefore such organisations are multicultural. Consequently, organisation's communication is impacted by the cultures of the staff members.

The empirical study reveals that communication problems in multicultural organisations are closely connected with a cultural background of a staff member. Cultural background also includes professional experience of staff members. For example, professional and organisational priorities can differ in different countries, and, consequently, cultures. Or a problem perceived in one country, is not a problem in another country.

Guidelines for staff members from multicultural organizations:
1. Discuss all the details of your common project. Pay attention to even the smallest tasks or procedures in the project.
2. Re-ask your questions to be sure that you understood correctly.
3. Stay in permanent contact with your team to provide them with your latest devepolments in the project.

List of sources:
1. Llopis-Lorente, A., Díez, P., Sánchez, A. Marcos, M.D., Sancenón, F., Martínez-Ruiz, P., Villalonga, R., &Martínez-Máñez, R. (2017). Interactive models of communication at the nanoscale using nanoparticlesthat talk to one another. Nat Commun 8, 15511 (2017). DOI: https://doi.org/10.1038/ncomms15511
2. Ahrens, A., Zascerinska, J., Bikova, A., Aleksejeva, L., Zascerinskis, M., & Gukovica, O. (2023). A NewDevelopment Model of Sustainable Communication for Higher Education Institutions. Education. Innovation.Diversity, 2(6), 30-48. DOI: https://doi.org/10.17770/eid2023.1.7175