

# Language, Culture, and Cognition in Cross-cultural Communication<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

It is well documented that communication styles and patterns vary across cultures. However, less is known about the process underlying these differences. Understanding *why* communication patterns vary is just as important as understanding *how* they vary because communication is by nature a dynamic and interactive process. Despite the importance of the transmission of meaning for successful communication, and the role that cognition plays in the assignment of meaning, little has been done to draw on cognitive theories to advance the field of cross-cultural communication. In this paper we draw on the attention-interpretation-message (AIM) framework of cross-cultural communication and on extant cross-cultural communication literature to elaborate on the role of linguistic structures and culture logic in influencing the cognitive processes associated with communication. We conclude with the identification of avenues for future research.

*Keywords:* cross-cultural communication, cognition, information processing, language, cultural logic, attention-interpretation-message model

## Language, Culture, and Cognition in Cross-cultural Communication

Researchers, consultants, international managers, and frequent travelers all agree that one of the most difficult challenges when crossing borders is effective communication. It is well established that communication patterns vary across cultures, and in this variance lies numerous opportunities for conflict and misunderstandings. For example, it has been documented that some cultures favor direct and clear communications while others prefer subtle and indirect messages (Saphiere, Mikk & DeVries., 2005), and that while in some cultures people emphasize what is said in others people focus on how it is said or who said it (Hall & Hall, 1990). Among others, studies have demonstrated that while the French emphasize clarity, precision and politeness in written communication, Americans rely more on examples tempered by efficiency (Varner, 1988), Americans, when compared to Europeans, tend to be more cheerful in their communication (Kotchemidova, 2010), and when compared to Americans, Japanese offers tend to be modest and subdued (Haneda & Shima, 1981). Gestures and body language variance have also been acknowledged. For instance a ring formed by the thumb and index finger is predominantly used to mean OK in Ireland and Britain, in France it is taken to mean zero, and in Greece and Turkey may be perceived to mean the human anus. Pointing gestures also differ: the incline of the palm can alter meaning in Naples Italy, persons from Panama or Laos may point with their lips, and pointing with a left hand in Ghana may be considered disrespectful (Kita, 2009).

In fact, a search for cross-cultural communication articles in top management and communication journal yield a significant number of articles documenting differences in communication patterns across different cultures (e.g., Congden, Matveev & Desplaces, 2009;

Peltokorpi, 2007; Pascale, 1978; Fu & Yukl, 2000; Varner, 1988; Graves, 1997; Metcalf, Bird & Dewar, 2008; Zhu, Nel & Bhat, 2006) or providing a detailed description of one particular culture's communication style (e.g. Haneda & Shima, 1981; Park, Dillon & Mitchell, 1998; Morley, Shockley-Zalabak & Cesaria, 1997; Cardon, 2009).

However, less is known about the process underlying these differences. Understanding *why* communication patterns vary is just as important as understanding *how* they vary because communication is by nature a dynamic and interactive process. While it is definitely helpful to understand trends in communication patterns, it is insufficient because it provides no information as to when and how these patterns may or may not apply. For example, Adler and colleagues (Adler, demonstrated that Japanese, American and Canadian businesspeople communicate differently in cross-cultural negotiations and intra-cultural negotiations, suggesting first that how individuals behave within their culture offers limited guidance as to how they may behave in a different cultural context, and second, that an understanding of cultural patterns of communication is insufficient to guide individuals embarking in cross-cultural interactions.

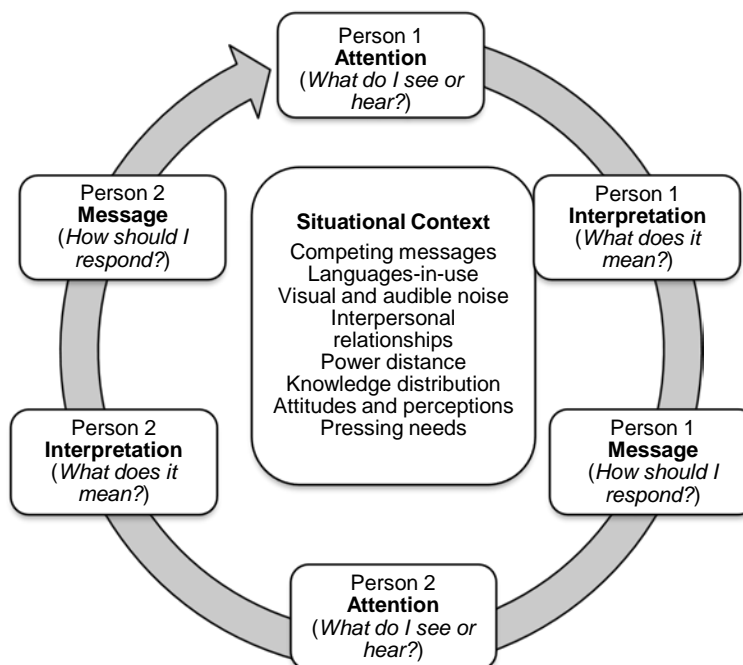
At its essence, communication is about conveying meaning to others. Surprisingly, despite the importance of the transmission of meaning for successful communication, and the role that cognition plays in the assignment of meaning, little has been done to draw on cognitive theories to advance the field of cross-cultural communication. Drawing on research on managerial cognition (Cyert & March, 1992; Daft & Weick, 1984; Walsh, 1995), we have proposed elsewhere (Nardon, Steers & Sanchez-Runde, 2011) a cognitive based framework to better understand the process of cross-cultural communication (see Exhibit 1). In this paper we draw on extant cross-cultural communication literature to elaborate on the role of linguistic structures and culture logic in influencing the cognitive processes leading to communication. We

start with a brief introduction of the Attention-Interpretation-Message framework of communication.

### The AIM Framework of Cross-Cultural Communication

As discussed in greater detail below, this framework highlights three key ingredients in interpersonal communication. First, when messages are sent, recipients must notice them. Then, once a message is selected out for attention, the recipients must interpret or decode it. And finally, the recipient must decide whether or not to reply and, if so, how to construct and transmit a response.

#### Exhibit 1: AIM Model of Interpersonal Communication



Throughout this process, the situational context in which the communication takes place can serve to reinforce, attract, or distract attention towards or away from some messages at the expense of others (e.g. other competing messages, languages in use, visual and audible noise, the

nature of interpersonal relationships, the power distance between speakers, degree of shared knowledge among the speakers, attitudes and perceptions, and other pressing needs experienced by the parties). In addition to attracting or deflecting attention, these factors can often serve to influence message interpretation and message construction. Each of the components of the model is explained below.

### **Attention to Messages**

At any given moment, an individual's brain is receiving and processing an enormous amount of information. Since people cannot simultaneously focus on all of the events surrounding them at a given time, they utilize *selective perception* to reduce the information they consciously process. In other words, they make mental choices about what is important, useful, or threatening, and focus their attention on these particular issues. As such, the information that becomes important is in the eye of the beholder—the information he or she is expecting or looking for—while other potentially useful information is often left by the wayside.

For example, consider the relative importance placed on context across cultures. Hall and Hall (1990) distinguish between high and low context cultures. In *low context* cultures, such as Germany, Scandinavia, and the U.S., the context surrounding the message is far less important than the message itself. The context provides the listener with little information relating to the intended message. As a result, speakers must rely more heavily on providing greater message clarity, as well as other guarantees like written documents and information-rich advertising. Language precision is critical, while assumed understandings, innuendos, and body language frequently count for little. By contrast, in *high context* cultures, such as those found in many parts of Asia, the context in which the message is conveyed is often as important as the message itself. As a result, less needs to be said or written down.

In many cultures, the way something is said can even be more important in communicating a message than the actual words that are used (Morand, 2003), but this is specially true in higher context cultures where communication is based on long-term interpersonal relationships, mutual trust, and personal reputations. People know the people they are speaking with, and reading someone's face becomes an important—and necessary—art.

### **Interpretation of Words and Actions**

When people see or hear something, they have a tendency to categorize the information received so they can make judgments about its authenticity, accuracy, or utility. They try to relate it to other events and actions so they can make sense out of it and know how to respond accordingly. This process is called *cognitive evaluation*, and culture can play a major role in its development.

For example, consider emotional norms and communication style. Compared to Europeans, Americans tend to engage in more cheerful communication that require inflated levels of positive emotional expression and positive cognitive stimulation. As an example, consider the use of the word “awesome”. Americans may classify many positive experiences as awesome and some may use the word frequently throughout the day to refer to rather mundane experiences. Europeans, on the other hand, use the word more sparingly, to classify a truly exceptional experience (Kotchemidova, 2010). As a result, the meaning assigned to the word “awesome” in a regular exchange will be different to Americans and Europeans. In other words, meaning making resides in the mind of the meaning maker and may not correspond to the actual message that is being communicated.

### **Message or response**

Finally, based on what was noticed and how the message was interpreted, the recipient must decide whether or not to reply and, if so, how to construct and transmit a response. The question in this stage is, what is an appropriate response? The response is likely to be influenced by socio-normative beliefs, including beliefs about what members can't, or shouldn't do, as well as what they can, must, or should do. This is a world of obligations, responsibilities, and privileges that form the interpersonal foundations of a culture. Not surprisingly, these norms and values influence how we choose to converse with both members of our own culture and others. Included here are a variety of expected communication protocols, or behaviors, including appropriate topics for discussion, message formatting, conversational formalities, and acceptable behaviors (Nardon et al., 2011; Saphiere et al., 2005).

### **Influences on cognition and communication**

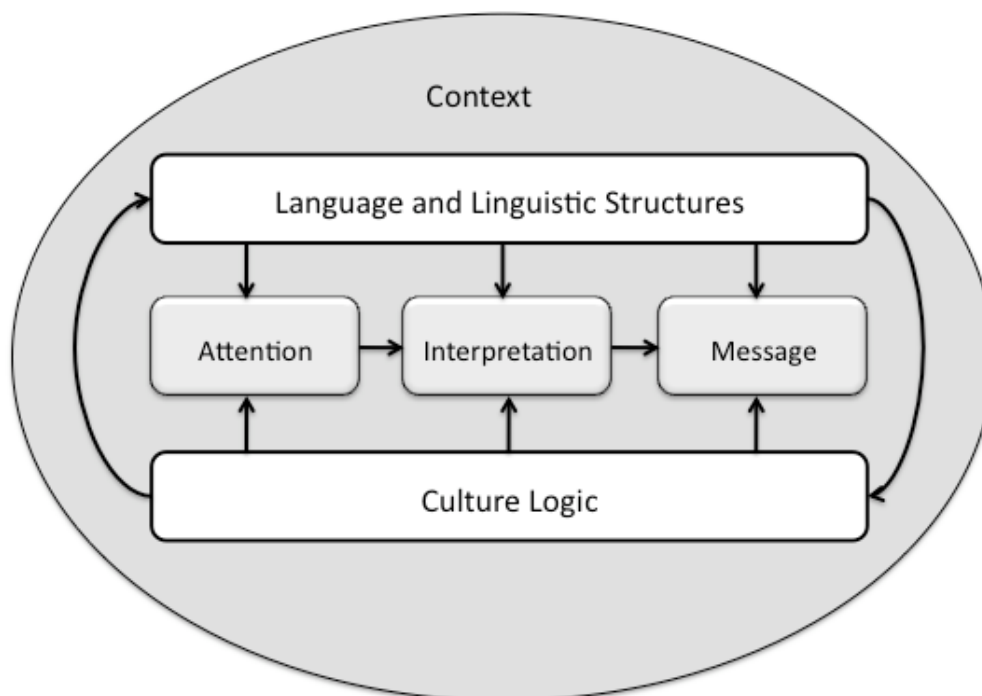
A common theme explored in the cross-cultural communication literature is the important role of language and culture in communication style, effectiveness and outcomes. We draw on this accumulated knowledge to explore the link between language and culture, specifically language structures and cultural logic, on the cognitive processes that lead to communication events. As illustrated in exhibit 2 and explained below, both linguistic structure and culture logic influence the process of attention, interpretation and message formatting.

While, we discuss language and culture as two separate and independent influences on communication, the reality is that the distinction between culture and language is not always clear. Quite the contrary, research and practical evidence suggest that language and culture are closely intertwined. Language and linguistic structures (i.e., the manner in which words, grammar, syntax, and the meaning of words are organized and used) are closely linked to cultures



because, while culture provides the meaning and meaning-making mechanisms underlying existence, language provides the symbols to facilitate the expression of such meanings (Samovar, Porter & McDaniel, 2007). For example, research done by Kashima and Kashima (1998) suggest that there is a correlation between a country's emphasis on individualism and lack of grammatical tolerance for pronoun drop. The use of pronouns (e.g. "I" or "you") maintains reference to the person to which the pronoun is referring. In some languages, such as English, the use of the pronoun is always obligatory (e.g. "I ate"). In others, such as Spanish, the subject pronoun may be dropped when the referent can be uncovered through the verb inflexion (e.g. "comí" or, in English, "ate"). In some languages, such as Chinese, the pronoun can be dropped even though there is no verb inflexion, as meaning is highly dependent upon the context of the communication.

### **Exhibit 2: Cognition and communication**



## Language and Linguistic Structures

Languages and their associated linguistic structures are intricately intertwined with the cognitive processes that affect cross-cultural communication. Italian film director Federico Fellini once observed, “A different language is not just a dictionary of words, sounds, and syntax. It is a different way of interpreting reality” (cited in Hill, 1997 p. 345).

Languages vary in the categories available to classify objects, in how verb tenses are used, how gender is or not assigned to things, and how spatial relations are conveyed. These differences influence what speakers must pay attention to and how they classify the external world and express their internal state.

In this regard, notable linguists Edward Sapir and Benjamin Whorf argue that people live “at the mercy of the particular language which has become the medium of expression for their society,” (Sapir, 1949 p. 162) suggesting that language is not only a way to solve communication problems and reproduce ideas, but also a way to shape ideas and, hence, worldviews. According to the Sapir and Whorf’s view, the world presents itself in kaleidoscopic ways, waiting for our minds to organize it according to some classification scheme provided by our language. That is, objects are not classified together through language because they are more alike than others; rather, they seem more alike because they have been classified together by a given language. As a result, different languages lead to different worldviews that can be difficult to alter (Shweder, 1984). In other words, the importance of language to understand different cultures and communication patterns goes beyond expressing different thoughts and contexts. Language imposes a structure on our way of thinking that leads to different ways of experiencing the world and, as a result, different worldviews and different ways to interpret stimuli.

For instance, languages can vary in the number and type of forms of address available to people when meeting others. In English, for example, there is typically only one word for “you.”

Native speakers use this same word when speaking to almost any person (royalty excepted), regardless of age, gender, seniority or position. On the other hand, romance languages like Spanish and French distinguish between a formal and an informal address (*usted/tu* in Spanish, *vous/tu* in French). In Japanese, there are, in fact, many equivalent words for “you,” depending someone’s age, seniority, gender, family affiliation, and position. The implication of these linguistic differences is that, depending on the language being spoken, people must pay attention to different cues and focus on different aspects of their context and message. While in Japan deciding if a speaker is younger or older than the other party is always important, this information often has little relevance for many English speakers.

Language also influences the meaning we attach to words. A case in point is the word “supervisor.” In English, the word supervisor carries with it connotations of authority, control, and power; a supervisor is a boss. In Japanese, by contrast, the word often assumes a more familial connotation; a supervisor is a senior role model and protector of subordinates, much like parents. Indeed, *kachou* in Japanese means supervisor (or, more accurately, section chief), but it also means patriarch or family head. In German, the term is *aufseher*, or overseer, carries strong connotations of technical competence and expertise; supervisors are chosen for their knowledge, technical competence and training abilities, not necessarily for their ability to control (Steers, Sanchez-Runde & Nardon, 2010). Conversely, the lack of a specific linguistic label is also significant of a given worldview. For instance, the fact that in some languages there is no direct translation for “privacy” is likely to indicate that either personal privacy is virtually absent or held in a quite different regard in that society (Duranti, 1997).

Language shapes ideas by providing the vocabulary and structure for contextual organization. What follows is that observers of the same phenomena, speaking different languages, will come up with different conclusions. Indeed, studies with bilingual and bicultural

Chinese-Americans and Mexican-Americans found that participants responded differently to questions depending on the language they were speaking, which reinforces the notion that culture and language are closely intertwined. These studies show that when answering in English, participants endorsed American values and when answering in Cantonese or Spanish, they endorsed Chinese and Mexican values respectively (Briley, Morris & Simonson., 2005).

Language also influences the choice of communication style. For example, a study of bilingual (Cantonese-English) workers in Hong-Kong found that the language in use influenced how topics were managed: when meetings were conducted in English, the discussion followed a sequential and linear pattern, while meetings conducted in Cantonese followed a more spiral or circular pattern (Du-Babcock, 2006). Moreover, the study suggested that second-language proficiency is a key factor in influencing topic-management behavior, as proficient individuals were more likely to engage in typical English language communication behavior. Another study (Park, Dillon & Mitchell, 1998), however, compared business letters written in English by Americans whose first language was English and Koreans to whom English was a second language and found that the structure of the letters varied significantly, suggesting that both culture and language proficiency may be necessary to facilitate communication across cultures and languages.

Language proficiency is thus a key determinant of communication outcomes. Du-Babcock & Du-Babcock (2001) suggest that international business communication happens within distinct “communication zones”, depending on the level of proficiency of each of the speakers in the languages involved. Each of these zones present different challenges for communicators. For example, when two individuals are monolingual in different languages, the communication must be carried through intermediaries, but when both individuals have some level of bilingualism the communication resources available increase significantly.

Moreover, when communicating cross culturally, cultural gaps can cause the use of a common language to be misleading. In a study of letters written in Japanese and translated into English, and vice versa, the authors concluded that the translated letters were often misleading as to each party's intentions. For instance the Japanese may refuse an offer in a negotiation by saying "it will be difficult," but the American party may interpret that the offer is still malleable (Haneda & Shima, 1981). In other words, the language use in a communication process influences both the patterns of attention and interpretation of messages, but its influence is not independent from culture.

### **Cultural Logic: Assumptions About Shared Meanings**

Cultural logic is the process of using one's own assumptions about normative behavior to interpret the messages and actions of others, thereby hypothesizing about their motives and intentions (Enfield, 2000). It is the process by which people attribute meaning to the words and actions of others based on the local meanings imbedded within their own culture. Cultural logic provides people with a system of assumptions about what is mutually known and understood among individuals. When people converse with one another, they often rely on these culture-based logical assumptions to facilitate the conversation.

Extant research suggests that individuals make assumptions about shared knowledge between themselves and receivers of their messages and construct messages based on commonly known knowledge (Clark & Marshall, 1981). Assumptions about shared meanings have also been referred as common ground (Cramton, 2001) or shared representations (Lau, Chiu & Lee, 2001). People often rely on this logic to facilitate communication and decrease what needs to be said to a manageable level, since it is often too difficult and time consuming for people to express all of their thoughts and assumptions behind everything they say. A shared cultural logic helps people

fill the gaps left by what is unsaid, thereby facilitating the process of creating a shared meaning. Shared norms for decisions making, attitudes towards hierarchy, social behavior, among others, allow for simplified and rapid communication (Brett, Behfar & Kern, 2006). When moving across cultures, however, there is often an assumption of a common knowledge that, in fact, is not common. We will now discuss how cultural logic may influence attention and interpretation processes.

Culturally based assumptions and worldviews influence individuals predisposition to notice some things and ignore others. As discussed above, it is more likely that high context cultures will notice and attach more meaning to contextual cues than low context cultures (Sommers, 2011). Likewise, research suggests that there is more variability of behavior from situation to situation in collectivist cultures than individualist cultures (Triandis, 1995; Stephan & Stephan, 2003) because contextual factors are deemed more important.

Likewise, cultural logic influence interpretation of messages. When inferring mental states of other people, research indicates that several cultures in North America and Western Europe emphasize a *norm of authenticity* (i.e., a belief that external actions and emotional displays are, or should be, generally consistent with internal states), while East and Southeast Asian societies often tend to consider such beliefs as immature, impolite, and sometimes bizarre (Peng, Ames & Knowles, 2001). For example, “speaking one’s mind” or “telling it like it is” often appears in a positive light to many Westerners, but not to many Asians. Many in Asia give more importance in communication processes to what is left unsaid instead of what is said in open and direct ways, while the opposite tends to apply in many Western societies. Peltokorpi (2007) discusses an example of this phenomenon when recounting interviews with expatriate managers in Japan. While the collectivist nature of the Japanese encouraged communication within groups, it was found to reduce communication across hierarchies, with managers having

most success communicating with workers in the absence of their direct supervisor. In the presence of a direct supervisor, the Japanese workers tended to defer to the supervisor, regardless of his or her position on the issue.

Research has shown that Americans raised in an individualistic society often rely on the isolated properties of people or objects they are examining in order to attach meaning or enhance understanding. As a result, when they see an individual, they tend to mentally classify him or her as a man or woman, black or white, professional or blue-collar, and so forth. By contrast, Chinese people raised in a more collectivist environment tend to classify people based on criteria that emphasize relationships and contexts. As a result, they are more likely to first see someone as a member of a particular group, clan, or organization, instead of focusing on his or her individual characteristics (Shweder, 1995). Moreover, in China and India more interpersonal strategies are used in initiating business relationships than in New Zealand and South Africa, which is consistent with the underlying cultural values of each culture (Zhu, Nel & Bhat, 2006).

However, the cognitive evaluation divide is hardly as simple as a Western and an Eastern classification. In a study conducted on the success of written marketing communication in America and Canada, it was found that American audiences appreciated lower power distance, higher appeals to patriotism, vanity and extrinsic rewards, while Canadians were found to be skeptical of marketing strategies that included high extrinsic rewards, holding the view that reward based marketing was indicative of lower quality products (Graves, 1997).

As discussed above, Americans have often been described as “cheerful” and tend to use exclamations and superlatives such as “this is fabulous!” and “great!” to refer to usual or mundane situations, as well as brag about themselves and their achievements. In a conversation between Americans, this excitement is naturally discounted and a statement about “a fantastic project” is reinterpreted as “a project that worked out alright”. In contrast, many Europeans prefer

to refer to situations with a light understatement and are more likely to say, “the project was not bad”. In a cross-cultural communication episode, the American statement may be taken literally by the European counterpart and cause later disappointment (or the individual making the statement may be perceived as lacking judgment) and the European statement may be interpreted by an American as worse than intended.

Cultural logic is the process of making assumptions about shared knowledge in order to communicate. As such it is influenced by one’s cultural background and assumptions but also by his or her perceived and actual knowledge of the other’s culture and individual. In other words, individuals interpret communication using their own attributions of the other culture, assigning cultural norms to the other party in an effort to facilitate the communication process. These assumptions may be correct at times, but at others may be based on incorrect stereotyping and further distort the interpretation of messages. Through learning about the culture and individuals involved, these projections are likely to grow closer to the actual culture, facilitating communication overtime (Beamer, 1995).

In addition, the existence of other common cultures such as organizational and professional culture may facilitate communication by overriding some national culture norms (Auer-Rizzi & Berry, 2000). For example, at General Electric (GE) the use of titles when addressing others is frowned upon as it is assumed that employees should be valued based on knowledge and performance not positions (Taras, Steel & Kirkman, 2011). GE workers are likely to rely on a more informal style of communication (that is, no titles) when addressing other co-workers regardless of their culture.

In summary, cultural logic or the process of using one own assumptions about normative behavior to interpret messages, influence communication by guiding attention to different aspects



of the exchange, providing means for interpretation of messages and guiding message construction.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

In this paper we elaborated on currently available research, to suggest a process model of cognitive influences on communication. Building on the AIM framework of communication (Nardon, et al., 2011) we discussed how linguistic structures and cultural logic influence attention and interpretation of messages. Language and linguistic structure help determine the structures and meanings underlying intended messages focusing attention and shaping interpretation. Culture logic guide senders' choices of what needs to be communicated and receivers' interpretation of the message.

The influences of language and culture on communication were the most salient in the cross-cultural communication literature, but by no means the only relevant factors. The context of the communication, including the type of relationship between speakers, the individuals' knowledge of each other's culture, and the locale in which the communication takes place can also influence what is noticed and how messages are interpreted. Below we elaborate on avenues for future research that we believe are needed to further advance our knowledge of the relationship between language, culture, cognition and communication.

#### **Situated Cognition: The Role of Context**

While recognizing the importance of an individual's background and biases in information processing (Starbuck & Milliken, 1988; Abrahamson & Hambrick, 1997; Finkelstein, Hambrick & Cannella, 2008), situated cognition researchers have questioned "the *primacy* of inside-the-head schemas in cognitive understanding and action" (Elsbach, Barr & Hargadon, 2005, p. 423) and suggested that the context in which individuals are located is

equally strong in shaping attention and interpretation (Ocasio, 1997; Lant, 2002; Elsbach et al., 2005).

In other words, the context in which individuals are located is a major influence on what they notice and interpret as well as the actions they take (Steers, Nardon & Sanchez-Runde, in press). For instance, research suggests that individuals tend to unconsciously conform to the behaviors of others (Sommers, 2011). For example, a study conducted at New York University paired individuals with a partner who constantly shook his foot or rubbed his head. Without realizing it, participants started to mirror this behavior (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). Thus, after being immersed in a new culture for a few days some communication behaviors may be assimilated even if the subtleties of meaning are not fully understood (e.g. bowing to others).

Together, this body of research suggests that action results from the interaction of cognitive schemas and context (DiMaggio, 1997; Lant, 2002) and that “cognitive activities should be understood primarily as interactions between agents and physical systems and with other people” (Greeno & Moore, 1993, p.49). Situated cognition is thus understood as “temporarily bounded interactions of individuals or collectives engaged in specific cognitive processes, and specific organizational contexts at particular points in time”. As Michael Cannon-Brookes, Vice President for Business Development at IBM suggests “You get very different thinking if you sit in Shanghai or Sao Paulo or Dubai than if you sit in New York” (The Economist, 2008).

More research is needed in exploring the situated aspect of cognition and communication, investigating how contextual forces may activate specific knowledge structures that guide communication. The salience of different contextual elements in the course of a communication is likely to influence the range of behaviors available to managers. In other words, it is likely that behaviors will change meaning depending on where they take place (e.g. in

the boardroom or at a pub), the people involved, how fluent participants are in each other languages and cultures, the type of relationship they have, and so on.

### **Communication medium**

The continuous evolution of communication technology and the widespread use of social network sites such as Twitter and Facebook, challenges many of the assumptions underlying the communication literature. An emerging stream of research suggests that the widespread use of newer forms of communication technologies have created new genres of communication that challenges common communication norms and may facilitate the creation of a common ground. For example, an analysis of sent and received faxes from a Finnish company to its global partners revealed that the users actually conformed to the norms of the medium regardless of location or culture. Further, it has been argued that the race for competitive advantage favors accuracy and efficiency at the expense of culturally and grammatically correct communication (Louhiala-Salminen, 1997). At the same time, others have argued while technological progress can contribute to apparent cultural homogeneity it can also reinforce cultural fault lines, especially notable in high context cultures (Fujimoto, Bahfen, Farmelis & Härtel, 2007). Thus, more research is required investigating the relationship between culture and cognition in these mediums.

### **Communication mechanisms**

Effective cross-cultural communication is no doubt a requisite for the management of multinational organizations. Research on multicultural teams suggests that multicultural teams bring in a broad range of perspectives and generate more alternatives (Watson, Kumar & Michelson, 1993). Similarly, a study of one thousand mergers and acquisitions found that, contrary to popular belief, mergers and acquisitions were more successful in the long run when

the two companies were from more disparate cultures (Chakrabarti, Gupta-Mukherjee & Jayaraman, 2009). However, the ability to successfully communicate is key for these outcomes. More research is required in identifying communication mechanisms that facilitate bypassing cultural and language barriers and assist in the development of shared understanding.

Researchers have argued that despite different interpretations across cultures, it is possible to organize action towards common goals using communication mechanisms. For example, Donnellon and colleagues (Donnellon, Gray & Bougon, 1986) have argued that communication can generate 'equifinal' meaning, from which organized action can follow through communication mechanisms such as metaphor, logical arguments, affect modulation and linguistic indirection. Others have pointed to the strengths of storytelling as a communication method, recognizing all humans as storytellers with the ability to send and receive messages that establish a value-laden reality, a common ground among all participants and provide a faster method of establishing a social relationship (Barker & Gower, 2010). More research investigating the validity of these methods to facilitate communication across cultures and contexts is required.

In conclusion, given the central role of cognitive processes in creating and sharing meaning across cultures, we believe more cross-cultural research in general, and cross-cultural communication in particular, should explicitly incorporate the role of cognition in its models. In this paper we have discussed the role of language and linguistic structures and culture logic in influencing attention, interpretation and formulation of messages. Through such efforts, we hope to see additional progress in explicating basic communication and interactive processes across cultures. If communication is a prerequisite to relationship building, we can think of no topic more deserving of additional attention, research, and theory-development.

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