

# Promoting Intercultural Communication

*Ms. Fareeda Ibad*

*Head of Department, Communication*

*College of Business Management*

## **Abstract**

This paper reviews recent literature on intercultural communication with particular reference to the business world. Part I discusses definitions of the phenomenon and identifies its distinguishing characteristics. Part II assesses the relevance and importance of intercultural communication in a rapidly global business world. Part III reviews the literature available on the subject to identify the major determinants of and barriers to effective interpersonal communication. Part IV evaluates the studies examined and establishes a background for an empirical study to be carried out in Pakistan. Part V outlines an on going research project which seeks to make operational the concepts presented here using Pakistan data.

## **Part I: Defining Intercultural Communication**

Among the many buzzwords of our times is “intercultural communication”. The key words ‘inter’ and ‘cultural’ signify a multidisciplinary field, involving people having divergent ways of thinking and doing possibly belonging to different geographical areas and speaking a variety of languages. “The term intercultural communication involves a wide range of communication issues that inevitably arise within an organization composed of individuals from a variety of religious, social, ethnic and technical backgrounds. Each of these individuals brings a unique set of experiences and values to the workplace, many of which can be traced to the culture in which they grew up and now operate” (SBE, 2002).

Upon further examination of the multidisciplinary function it can be said that research and study of intercultural communication would seek to understand how people from different countries and cultures behave, communicate and perceive the world by creating a cultural synergy (Bakic-Miric, 2008). The blend of cultural backgrounds and professional

experiences has become a global reality in the business world. To work effectively with diverse people, managers need to know not only about the culture of the person with whom they are interacting, but also about his or her personality, behavior patterns in conflict situations, demographics and life experiences (Triandes & Singelis,1998).

The perception of the definition of intercultural communication differs among researchers. In its most basic form it includes strands of the field that contributes to it such as, psychology, cultural studies, anthropology and communication. Karlfried Knapp defines it “as the interpersonal interaction between members of different groups which differ from each other in respect of the knowledge shared by their members and in respect of their linguistic forms of symbolic behavior” (Knapp,1995). Bakic, as quoted by Knapp, states that intercultural communication is not new; as long as people from different cultures have been encountering one another there has been intercultural communication. “It is a symbolic interpretative, transactional, contextual, process in which the degree of difference between people is large and important enough to create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about what is regarded as competent behaviors that should be used to create shared meanings” (Knapp,1995).

Other definitions assume that “intercultural communication is a dynamic process of interrelation, transference and exchange of cultural values and cultural specificities, and a process of interaction of diverse cultures which are being increasingly marked by new information and communication technologies” (Vertovec & Cohen,2002). In the light of these definitions it can be said that intercultural communication is based on the understanding that the communicative needs of culturally different others are influenced by their culture-specific norms for expressing themselves and are thus likely to differ from one’s own cultural norms. Intercultural communication is based on the ability to foresee the expectations and evaluations of culturally different others, and thereby, require adjustment of one’s communication style to the communicative needs of people from other cultures. This means that whenever a message created in one culture is received and interpreted in another culture, intercultural communication occurs. According to Samovar, Porter & Stefani, intercultural communication is communication between people whose cultural perceptions and symbol systems are different enough to alter the communication event (Samovar, Porter & Stefani,2000).

Communication in organizations can be defined as “an evolutionary, culturally dependent process of sharing information and creating relationships in environments designed for manageable, cooperative goal oriented behavior” (Wilson, Goodal & Waagen,1986). Here a definition of culture would be appropriate. “Culture” will be understood here in the sense of cognitive cultural anthropology as a body of knowledge shared by members of a

society as to standards of perceiving, believing, evaluating and acting (Goodenough, 1971), a knowledge which is itself manifested in the public performance of symbolic behavior (Geertz, 1973) and which is taken for granted when dealing with one another (ABS, 1973). It is true that the world is shrinking and the contact of people from different cultural backgrounds has been increasing more than ever before as that in the process of intercultural communication, there are lots of barriers such as language differences, different values, cultural shock, which greatly affect human communication (Zhou & Cui, 2007).

Having clarified the meaning of interpersonal communication: the question arises what is its relevance and importance in multinational organizations which in essence are multicultural?

## **Part II: Relevance and Importance of Intercultural Communication in a Globalizing World**

In multicultural organizations, a large portion of communication occurs between people with different cultural backgrounds. Thus, in the context of business organizations, a further elaboration of the definition of culture would be adequate. Culture can be viewed as a cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, meanings, beliefs, values and attitudes (Porter, 1972). Culture defines how people express themselves, how problems are solved, the way people think, and the way people interact with each other (Hall, 1959). Achieving an understanding of interaction and message production that involves individuals or groups of people from different cultures is the primary interest of intercultural communication (Korzenny & Korzenny, 1984). To re-emphasize its importance, "intercultural communication studies the communication phenomena in which participants, different in cultural backgrounds, come into direct and indirect contact with one another" (Kim, 1984).

Cultural and technological forces are reshaping our world specially the forces of globalization and informatization. These forces have influenced politics, culture, business conditions, and even human lives. Economic integration and advances in telecommunication and transportation have broken down geographical isolation: The world is more global and more mobile than ever before (Korhonen, 2003). This is fast becoming a reality in the Pakistani context as well, with the number of multinational companies and foreign banks increasing steadily.

These trends have resulted in more markets melding together into one global market forcing us to interact with people having different languages, life styles, opinions and interpretations of what life should be in an international setting. This is the reason why

intercultural communication has become important and this importance will steadily grow in the future when globalization is linked by new technology, communication is, for example, intensified via electronic media facilitating trade contacts and international projects (Korhonen, 2003). Success in business life doesn't only depend on professional knowledge, which is of course important and fundamental for a successful career but also on the ability to 'interpret' gestures, body language and behavior to react adequately (Bobanovic, 2007). Young (2005) believes that "people with a well-developed sensitivity in communicating with foreigners definitely have a big advantage and will probably succeed in business life".

When companies expand their operations abroad, it means balancing between prospects of growth and the risk associated with operating in unfamiliar markets. Successful companies and employees are those who see cultural diversity as an opportunity, as something that can be learned, managed and made use of, and who are willing to develop their intercultural competence as part of their social and communication competencies. The components of intercultural communication competence contain cognition, i.e. knowledge, affect, i.e. attitudes and emotions, and behavior and skills (Korhonen, 2003).

### **Part III: Determinants of and Impediments to Effective Interpersonal Communication**

Gudykunst and Kim (1995) have observed that "we communicate the way we do because we are raised in a particular culture and learn its language, rules and norms. Different cultures may have different rules and norms". Understanding the other's culture facilitates cross-cultural communication. Intercultural communication can be understood via the same basic variables and processes used to describe other forms of communication. All communication occurs between people who have varying degrees of familiarity with each other. The key factor in understanding intercultural communication is the concept of the stranger. Strangeness and familiarity make up a continuum. The term 'stranger' is used to refer to those people at the most unfamiliar end of the continuum. Thus anyone could be considered a stranger, given a sufficiently foreign context. A stranger has limited knowledge of his/her new environment-of its norms and values. And in turn, the locals have little knowledge of the stranger-of his beliefs, interests and habits.

Generally speaking, communication with another involves predicting or anticipating their responses. When communicating with someone familiar we are usually confident in our anticipation, and may not even notice that we are making such predictions. In contrast, when we communicate with strangers we are more aware of the range of their possible responses, and of the uncertainty of our predictions.

Communicative predictions are based on data from three levels. First is the cultural level, involving information about the other's culture, its dominant values and norms. This is often the only level of information available when communicating with a stranger. Even so, a better understanding of the stranger's culture yields better predictions. The second level of information is socio-cultural. This includes data about the other's group membership, or the groups to which they seek to belong. This type of information is the predominate data used in intercultural communication. Finally there is psycho-cultural data. This is information, about the individual's characteristics and is the sort of data most relevant to communication with friends. We understand such data by the process of social cognition.

Social cognition is a dialectical process which involves both grouping particulars into categories based on their similarities, and of distinguishing individuals from their categories based on their differences. Communication with strangers often relies heavily on categorization (stereotyping). Such stereotypes may be inaccurate or may not apply to the present individual. To improve communication with strangers we must pay attention to their unique, individual features. Effective communication with strangers requires an increased awareness of our communication behaviors. First, we tend to categorize things automatically, and so we are less aware of doing it. It takes more of our conscious awareness to differentiate particular individuals from their stereotypical categories. Second, much of our daily communication follows familiar scripts, and so we are not consciously aware of that communication behavior. We cannot rely on such familiar scripts and norms when communicating with a stranger. Our communication will be improved if we recognize that familiar scripts do not apply and seek to modify our communication behaviors accordingly (Gudykunst & Kim, 1995).

Within the context of globalized business, intercultural communication looks at how people communicate (verbally and non-verbally), manage work, work together, approach deadlines, negotiate, meet, greet, build relationships, etc. These topics are becoming much more relevant now on two fronts. First, for businesses with a mix of cultures working together, and second, for businesses wanting to trade successfully abroad. In both situations if individuals are unaware of how best to get along and get business done, it can and does lead to poor performance and lost deals. Greater understanding of intercultural communication differences, manners and etiquette, protocol and communication styles certainly leads to a much higher probability of achieving business goals.

Ultimately, intercultural communication today means, sustaining a competitive edge. Why? Business today is highly competitive. Whether someone is looking for a new

supplier, giving a presentation, or negotiating a contract intercultural communication can, does and will play an important role. It impacts our ability to communicate effectively within a culture as well as how we are perceived.

Working in the globalized world economy is proving to have a positive effect on individuals and companies. As people are forced to think outside the box they develop greater interpersonal skills, flex their creative muscle and learn new ways of doing things. Working in an interconnected global economy, it is important to build good relationships with people from other cultures. This leads to better business (Rumsey, 2007).

In the work environment, the 'competence' of a person is judged by his or her ability to perform effectively the required task (Klemp, 1979). And most scholars adapt the 'communication competence' paradigm to intercultural communication and interactions (Dinges & Lieberman, 1989). Communication researchers examining 'intercultural communication competence' tend to define the interculturally and communicatively competent individual as having a particular set of personal characteristics (McCroskey, 1982). This person is able to establish an interpersonal relationship with a foreign national through an effective exchange of both verbal and non-verbal levels of behavior (Dinges, 1983).

Much of intercultural communication competence can be viewed in the interaction of multicultural teams where "the failure to successfully integrate diverse workforces has negative implications for organizational performance" (Sinha, 1983). Multicultural teams present unique challenges to effective communication. Team members from different cultures may have different value systems, goals and communication styles and these differences can lead to miscommunication and conflict (Thissen, 2007).

According to Brett (2006) multicultural teams face four barriers to success. First of all, there is direct versus indirect communication. The second challenge is trouble with accents and fluency. Then there are differing attitudes towards hierarchy and authority. Finally, there are conflicting norms for decision-making (Brett, 2006). It would be appropriate at this point to explain direct and indirect communication. Direct (effective) communication is marked by the capacity for taking risks in order to understand and be understood. It is two-way communication, with ideas, opinions, values, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings flowing freely from one individual to another. Indirect (ineffective) communication can be explained thus: many people fear taking risks in interpersonal relationships, yet since they need to feel that they are articulate and adept at "communication," they often engage in what we can call "pseudo communication," In reality, they try to direct the risk of interpersonal communication away from themselves.

They are afraid to present their own opinions, ideas, feelings, desires. Such communication is manifest in impersonal speech, clichés and a variety of question types (Organizational Behavior Resources).

Laray M. Barna (1997) has identified six stumbling blocks in intercultural communication. These refer to the main causes of frustration and misunderstanding in intercultural encounters. The first one of them is the assumption of similarities. This refers to the naïve assumption that since we are all human, we are all basically alike. The reason for this assumption might also be our discomfort in dealing with difference. In any case, as we have learned by now, people have different assumptions and world views, in a word cultures. Unless we are aware of these differences, we are certain to face difficulties in communicating with people from other cultures.

The second and third stumbling blocks according to Barna are linguistic ones, in other words, language differences and nonverbal misinterpretations. The fourth block is the preconceptions and stereotypes that we might hold. Stereotypes are overgeneralized, secondhand beliefs that provide conceptual bases from which we “make sense” out of what goes on around us, whether or not they are accurate or fit the circumstance. Stereotypes are stumbling blocks for communicators because they interfere with objective viewing of stimuli. In other words we have a certain stereotypical preconception of a person from a culture we interpret his/her behavior according to this preconception, whether or not the reason for the behavior is what we think it is.

The fifth stumbling block is the tendency to evaluate. We tend to approve or disapprove the statements or actions of other person or group rather than to try to comprehend completely the thoughts and feelings expressed from the world view of the other. This prevents the open-minded attention needed to look at the attitudes and behavioral patterns from the other’s point of view. Finally, the sixth block is called high anxiety or tension. It is also known as stress. Too much anxiety or tension requires some form of relief which too often comes in the form of defences, such as the skewing of perceptions, withdrawal, or hostility. High anxiety often underlies and compounds the other stumbling blocks.

Because we learn to be members of our own culture, a phenomenon called ‘ethnocentrism’ may result. Ethnocentric people tend to value their own culture above everything else and judge the others using one’s own cultural criteria. To some extent, all the cultures are ethnocentric. This is natural, since people have been brought up thinking that their way is “the natural way” to do things. However, ethnocentrism can also lead to

cultural misunderstandings if it is not recognized because it provides us with only limited choice of human thinking and behaving.

On the other extreme from ethnocentrism is ethnorelativism. Bennet (1986) has developed a model for development from one end of the continuum to the other. The core concept of this model is 'difference'. We must recognize that cultural differences exist among people in order to move from ethnocentrism to ethnorelativism. According to Bennet, this happens in six stages, which are denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation and integration. In the first stage the assumption is that everyone in the world is the same as us. Characteristic for the second stage is the feeling of superiority of one culture over another. In stage three, differences are recognized but trivialized by assuming that basically all humans are alike. The fourth stage represents acceptance and respect for cultural differences (Barna, 1997).

Having identified the problems facing intercultural communicators, it has become imperative to establish the meaning of 'intercultural communication competence'. According one definition, 'intercultural communication competence' is "the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors to elicit a desired response in a specific environment" (Chen & Starosta, 1998). Intercultural communication competence has four dimensions: personality strength, communication skills, psychological adaptation and cultural awareness. Examples of these might be the ability to stay positive in stressful situations, the skills to use appropriate nonverbal communication cues, the strength to survive culture shock and the ability to be aware of and maintain our own cultural identity without jeopardizing intercultural relations (Chen & Starosta, 1998).

Intercultural communication competence entails not only knowledge of the culture and language, but also affective and behavioral skills such as empathy, human warmth, charisma and the ability to manage anxiety and uncertainty (Gudykunst, 1998).

Intercultural communication competence requires sufficient knowledge, skilled actions, and suitable motivation (Spitzberg, 1991). Using the multicultural team member perspective, intercultural communication competence consists of the knowledge skills, and personality orientation components. Briefly, the knowledge component includes culture-specific information about a particular culture, and information about one's own cultural system. The skills component contains the appropriate and effective behaviors perceived as competent in a variety of cultures. The personality orientation component includes personal intentions toward intercultural interaction, feelings, emotional, and physiological reactions toward foreign nationals, and general interest and emphatic attitude toward people from different cultures (Lustig & Koester, 1999).



Worldwide, as the figurative distance between diverse cultures continues to decrease, and as the population continues to reflect greater cultural diversity, the proximity to cultural differences grows closer. This nearness demands development of intercultural understanding and sensitivity in order to live peacefully among and interact successfully with others who reflect unique and different cultures (Samovar & Porter, 2007).

The primary purpose of this study is to help managers become more effective intercultural communicators. The suggestions advanced are both universal and specific. Being alert to potential problems is the first step toward understanding. Once problems have been identified it is easier to seek means of improvement (Samovar & Porter, 2007).

Brian W. Spitzberg (2007) offers a profile of the effective intercultural communicator. More specifically, he suggests a course of action that is likely to enhance our competence when we are in an intercultural situation. His suggestions take the form of propositions that can be used to guide our actions. We are told that intercultural competence is increased if we (1) are motivated, (2) are knowledgeable, (3) possess interpersonal skills, (4) are credible, (5) meet the expectations of our communication partner, (6) can strike a balance between autonomy needs and intimacy needs, (7) reflect similarities, (8) manifest trust, (9) offer social support, and (10) have access to multiple relationships (Spitzberg, 2007).

Stella Ting Toomey (2007) moves from a general analysis of communication competency to a specific topic associated with intercultural communication: intercultural conflict. The “Conflict is inevitable in all social and personal relationships.” To preempt the problems created by interpersonal disharmony, particularly in the intercultural setting, Ting Toomey maintains that conflict must be defined and managed. To help us improve our capacity to clarify and regulate conflict, the author explains three significant features of intercultural conflict. First, a framework that uses low-context versus high-context and monochronic and polychronic time is advanced to demonstrate why and how cultures are different and similar. Second, some basic assumptions and factors that contribute to conflict are discussed. Finally, Ting-Toomey offers a series of skills that can help individuals manage conflict when it develops in the intercultural encounter (Ting Toomey, 2007).

Kim & Ruben use the term “intercultural transformation” to describe the process by which individuals move beyond the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of their initial cultural framework to incorporate other cultural realities. The process can be described as follows:

The process of becoming intercultural – of personal transformation from cultural to

intercultural – is a process of growth beyond one’s original cultural conditioning. One consequence of extensive communication experiences and the subsequent internal transformation is the development of a cultural identity that is far from being “frozen.” An intercultural person’s cultural identity is characteristically open to further transformation and growth. This does not mean that a highly intercultural person’s identity is culture-free or cultureless. Rather, it is not rigidly bound by membership to any particular culture. ....A second consequence [of an intercultural transformation].... is a cognitive structure that enables a broadened and deepened understanding of human conditions and cultural differences and a view of things that are larger than any one cultural perspective....The increased cognitive depth and breadth is, in turn, likely to facilitate corresponding emotional and behavioral capacities as well (Kim & Ruben,1998).

Interculturally competent communicators integrate a wide array of culture-general knowledge into their behavioral repertoires, and they are able to apply that knowledge to the specific cultures with which they interact. They are also able to respond emotionally and behaviorally with a wide range of choices in order to act appropriately and effectively within the constraints of each situation. They have typically had extensive intercultural communication experiences, and they have learned to adjust to alternative patterns of thinking and behaving.

Lustig & Koester (2006) state that in order to improve intercultural competence by building positive motivations, or emotional reactions, to intercultural interactions, it is necessary to take an honest inventory of the various ways in which other people are categorized. Identify obvious ethnocentric attitudes about appearance, food, and social practices. List stereotypes, both positive and negative, that people hold about the various cultural groups with which they regularly interact and identify those stereotypes that others might hold about your culture. By engaging in this kind of self-reflective process, it is possible to become more aware of the ways in which social categorizations detract from an ability to understand communication from culturally different others.

Ethnocentrism, stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination, and racism are so familiar and comfortable that overcoming them requires a commitment both to learning about other cultures and to understanding one’s own. A willingness to explore various cultural experiences without prejudgment is necessary. An ability to behave appropriately and effectively with culturally different others, without invoking prejudiced and stereotyped assumptions, is required. Although no one can completely overcome the obstacles to intercultural competence that naturally exist, the requisite knowledge, motivation, and skill can certainly help to minimize the negative effects of prejudice and discrimination.

The intercultural challenge for us now living in a world where interactions with people from different cultures are common features of daily life is to be willing to grapple with the consequences of prejudice, discrimination, and racism at the individual, social, and institutional levels. Because prejudice and racism are such emotionally charged concepts, it is sometimes very difficult to comment on their occurrence in our interactions with others.

Although discussions about prejudice, discrimination, and racism can lead to a better understanding of the interpersonal dynamics that arise as individuals seek to establish mutually respectful relationships, they can just as easily lead to greater divisions and hostilities between people. The challenge for interculturally competent communicators is to contend with the pressing but potentially inflammatory issues of prejudice and discrimination in a manner that is both appropriate and effective.

We are also challenged to function competently in a world that, increasingly, is characterized by multiple cultures inhabiting adjacent and often-overlapping terrain. The ability to adapt to these intercultural settings – to maintain positive, healthy relationships with people from cultures other than your own – is the hallmark of the interculturally competent individual (Lustig & Koester, 2006).

According to Payne, (2008) within the business world intercultural communication is often vital for success. Effective communication between colleagues from different cultural backgrounds ensures a team is working harmoniously. The six steps to intercultural communication are basic pointers that all working in intercultural teams should be aware of to ensure culture becomes a vehicle for positive advancement rather than a barrier.

### 1. Break Assumptions

Everyone makes or has assumptions about others. Assumptions are beliefs rather than objective truth and are usually influenced by a number of subjective factors.

For intercultural communication to truly work, people need to assess their assumptions and ask themselves why they hold those ideas or beliefs. By doing so and even openly examining them with others, the initial barrier to intercultural communication is overcome.

## 2. Empathize

In order to come to understand and appreciate people from different cultures, empathy is vital. Through putting yourself in someone else's shoes you come to see or appreciate their point of view.

## 3. Involve

Involving others in tasks or decision making empowers and builds strong relationships. Using intercultural diversity is in essence a more creative approach to problem solving as it incorporates different points of view.

## 4. Discourage Herd Mentality

Herd mentality refers to a closed and one dimensional approach. Such a way of thinking curbs creativity, innovation and advancement as people are restricted in how to think as individuals, bring their cultural influences to the table and share ideas that may be outside the box.

## 5. Shun Insensitive Behavior

People can and do behave in culturally insensitive ways. By attacking someone's person, you attack their culture and therefore their dignity. This can only be divisive. Intercultural communication is based upon people thinking through words and actions to ensure they do not act inappropriately. When insensitive behavior is witnessed it is the responsibility of all to shun it and ensure it remains unacceptable.

## 6. Be Wise

Wisdom is not called wisdom for nothing. People need to be aware how to interact with people with respect and knowledge. Intercultural communication is essentially founded upon wisdom, i.e. showing maturity of thought and action in dealing with people. Through thinking things out and have background knowledge to intercultural differences much of the communication problems witnessed within business could be avoided (Payne, 2008).

## **Part IV: Findings Based on the Studies and Background for Empirical Study**

The literature reviewed emphasizes the importance of the intercultural communication competence level of workers who are a part of multicultural organizations and teams. The studies examined for this paper are based on empirical data. An interculturally and communicatively competent member has been identified and the relative importance of

the intercultural communication competence components established. It is without doubt that the level of intercultural communication competence of individual members affects their performance in the multicultural environment. The studies agreed that cultural differences abound in the workplace and team members need to understand each other to work well. The ability to understand different nuances of communication is important and poor communication or a lack of understanding of diverse cultures between members could seriously hamper the team's effectiveness. The absence of empathy, low levels of intercultural communication competence, poor listening habits, and the inability to understand others impairs interaction among communicators in multicultural teams.

Furthermore, the studies examined brought forward the barriers to intercultural communication effectiveness. They established that barriers to intercultural communication were the reasons for frustration and misunderstanding in intercultural exchanges. Strategies to promote intercultural communication competence in multicultural teams were also examined as were issues relating to conflict, anxiety/uncertainty management.

Armed with the understanding of the importance and relevance of intercultural communication let us look at the Pakistani scenario. Pakistan is a melting pot by virtue of its geographical status. This land has experienced migration for centuries via both land and sea routes. This accounts for its rich cultural diversity. Since according to Capowski (1996) quoting Thomas R. Roosevelt Jr., "diversity is to deal with the collective mixture of differences and similarities along a given dimension extending to age, personal and corporate background, education, function, and personality including lifestyle, sexual orientation, geographic origin, tenure with an organization, exempt or non exempt status, and management or non-management", it becomes important to take up the case for intercultural communication competence in Pakistan.

As empirical and anecdotal evidence in the studies examined tells us, organizations that are open to diversity will achieve a competitive advantage against organizations that are either culturally homogeneous or fail to successfully utilize their diversity, the challenge for Pakistan and Pakistani companies to utilize diversity in all aspects of the workforce remains an objective. As Pakistan seeks more and more to rank as an economic power in the 21st century and ensure its place among globalized economies by opening its doors to foreign companies to do business here, the focus has shifted to improved communication practices involving not only technology, but team-based environments.

Teams help overcome the weaknesses of individuals by generating creative synergy in the realms of problem solving, decision making, research and development and many others and in all these areas Pakistani managers fall short is a widespread belief. Teamwork skills

are one of the 'must have' skills in the work environment and a collaborative management approach is especially important when the tasks are complex and the level of interdependence high. Employees working for multinational companies and foreign banks in Pakistan have a greater need to be effective team players and that too, when the teams are multicultural, involving members of both low-context and high-context cultures. Such teams provide Pakistani managers with technical know how, improved processes, a global competitiveness attitude and increased creativity to ensure the achievement of the organizational goals of their companies' Pakistani operations.

Multicultural teams also enhance the need for quality communication in the language of business, which in the case of Pakistan happens to be English. However, the reality is very different. Intercultural communication competence has assumed a great deal of importance in Pakistani multinational corporations due to the fact that the operators belong to diverse cultural backgrounds. For Pakistanis it is the diversity within and the diversity without that they have to contend with. When they interact with managers from their parent organization, they face problems in perceiving what competent communication is all about.

This issue has been the subject of research in many countries and has revealed that the challenges facing multicultural teams, such as the ones in the Pakistani context, can be addressed with competent communication and effective team development. In the light of this observation there is a dire need to gauge the intercultural communication competence level of Pakistani managers who are a part of multicultural teams, and how they perceive such communication.

#### **Part V: The Way Ahead**

In order to analyze and document the salient issue of communication competence of managers working in multinational organizations and foreign banks in Pakistan both quantitative and qualitative methods would be used to solicit information. The areas of study would be intercultural communication competence which would yield quantitative data based on the Integrated Intercultural Communication Competence Model which possesses test-retest reliability and internal consistency. This model views effective intercultural interactions as a function of the success of the communication process between culturally different persons. Furthermore, the research determines that the Integrated Intercultural Communication Competence Model as the most appropriate when examining the impact of intercultural communication competence on the performance of multicultural teams. The model comprises two questionnaires to determine intercultural communication competence and what respondents consider as a high performance team. The model is based on the research of Abe and Wiseman (1983)

and Cui and Awa (1992). Abe and Wiseman reported the dimensions of intercultural effectiveness while Cui and Awa examined the concept of intercultural effectiveness based on five underlying dimensions; interpersonal skills, social interaction, cultural empathy, personality traits, and managerial ability. The model was developed by Matveev, Rao, & Milter (2001).

The qualitative aspect of the empirical study would be data collection via semi-structured interviews and some formal discussion and feedback sessions. This exercise will yield in-depth information about how the subjects view intercultural communication competence and its relationship with multicultural team performance.

In conclusion, the research would aim to test extant models and theoretical assumptions in the Pakistani context, and also investigate the ground realities related to intercultural communication competence with the hope that it would assist business people in solving the problem of improving multicultural team performance which would in turn, result in dynamism, cohesion and efficiency in the workplace.

**Fuente: Brandysinario.com [en línea]**

**[http://www.brandsynario.com/mindkey/article/553\\_promoting-intercultural-communication.aspx](http://www.brandsynario.com/mindkey/article/553_promoting-intercultural-communication.aspx)**