

Cross Cultural Understanding

Chapter 4

Language, Communication, Culture and Power in Context



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Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

1. Define communication.
2. Describe the process of human communication.
3. Identify nine properties of communication.
4. Describe the nature of language and communication.
5. Explain the relationship between language, communication, culture, power and context.
6. Identify the traits and behaviours of an effective intercultural communicator.
7. identify and describe multiple verbal communication styles
8. explain the communication accommodation theory (CAT) and the difference between 'convergence' and 'divergence'
9. identify the traits and behaviours of an effective intercultural communicator.



‘Culture is communication and
communication is culture’.

(E.T. Hall, 1959: 186, as cited in Jackson, 2014)



Properties

&

Definitions

of

Communication

Process

Interactive

Symbolic

Dynamic

Situated
&
Contextual

Power-
infused

Cultural

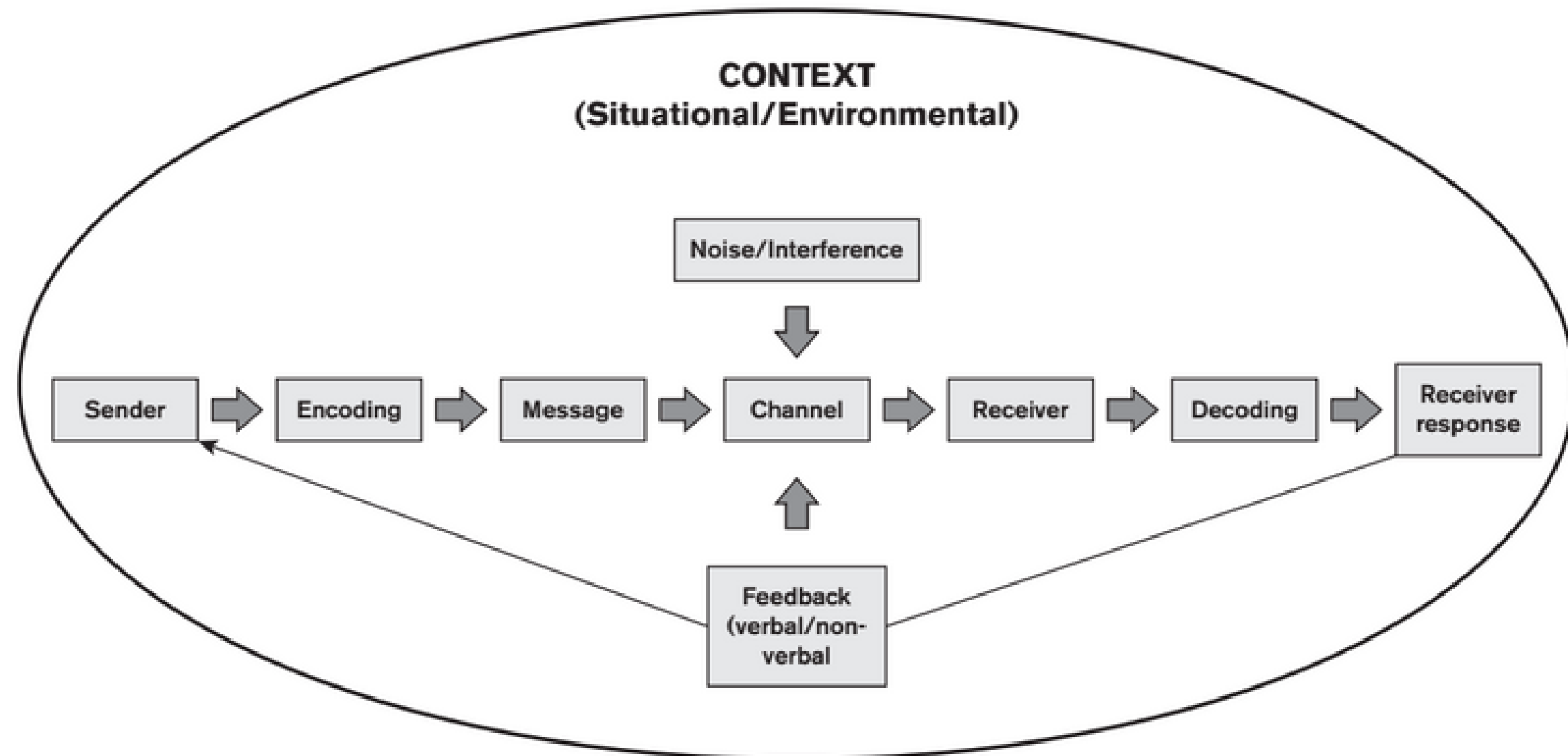
PERVASIVE

Intentional
&
unintentional

(Jackson, 2014)

Communication is ‘the process by which individuals try to exchange ideas, feelings, symbols, meanings to create commonality’.

(Schmidt et al. 2007: 59 as cited in Jane Jackson, 2014)



(Jackson, 2014)

Communication Properties



1. Communication as a Process
2. Communication as Dynamic
3. Communication as interactive and transactive
4. Communication is Symbolic
5. Communication is both intentional and unintentional
6. Communication is situated and contextual
7. Communication as pervasive
8. Communication as power-infused
9. Communication as cultural

(Jackson, 2014)

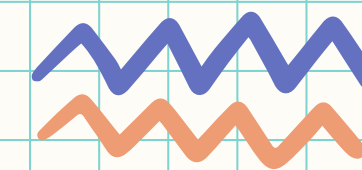
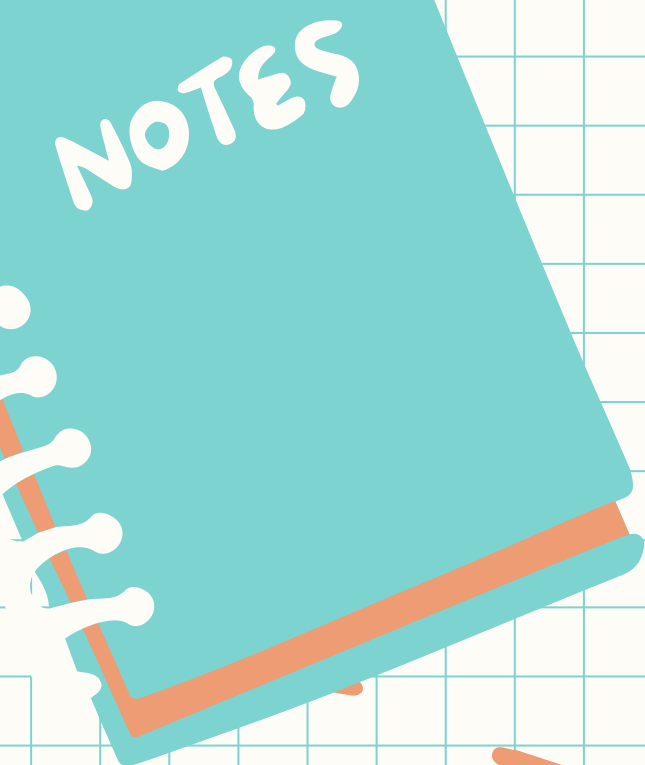
Communication as a Process

Russian proverb says, 'Once a word goes out of your mouth, you can never swallow it again'

("...", n.d., as cited in Jackson, 2014)



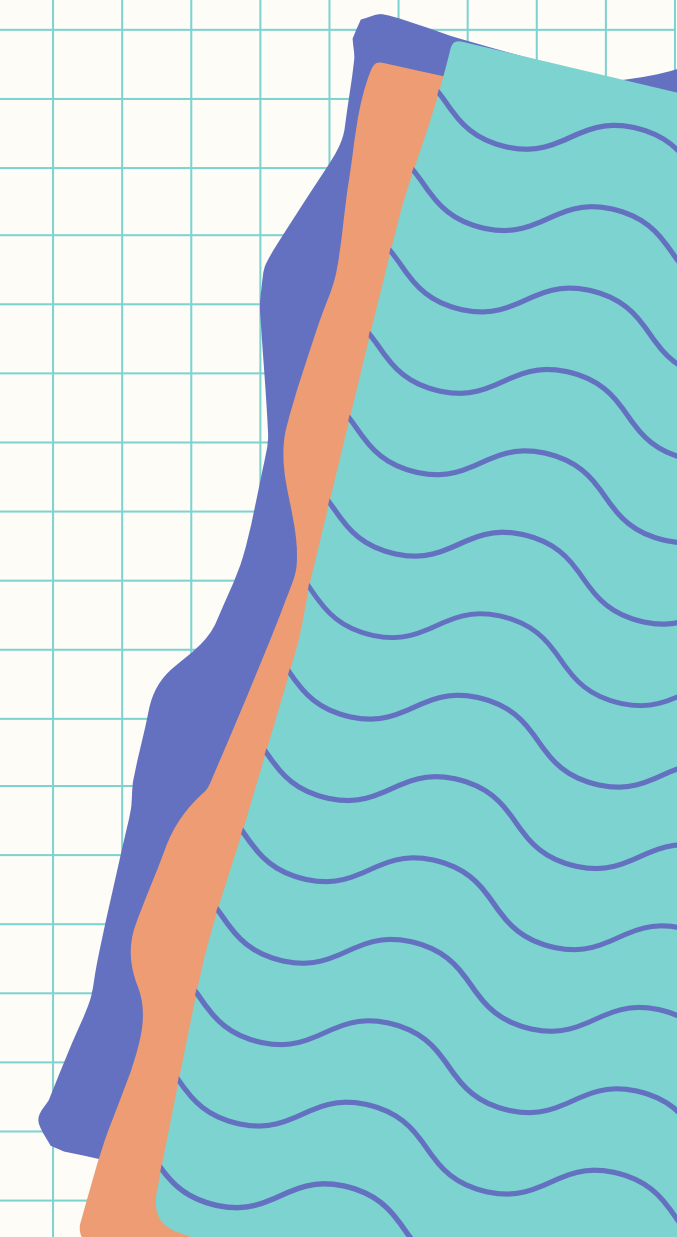
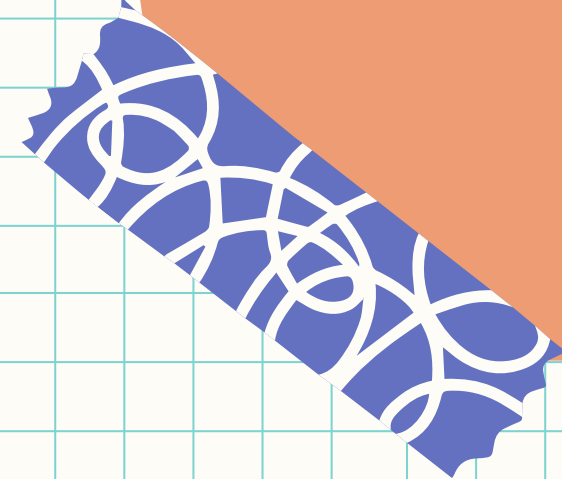
Source: Canva.com



Communication as Dynamic

”... IT IS ALWAYS DEVELOPING AND
NEVER PASSIVE OR STATIC...”

(Jackson, 2014)



COMMUNICATION

"interaction between two or more people is a fundamental dimension of communication"



Transactive

Individuals both send and
receive (and interpret)
messages



Interactive

A two-way process

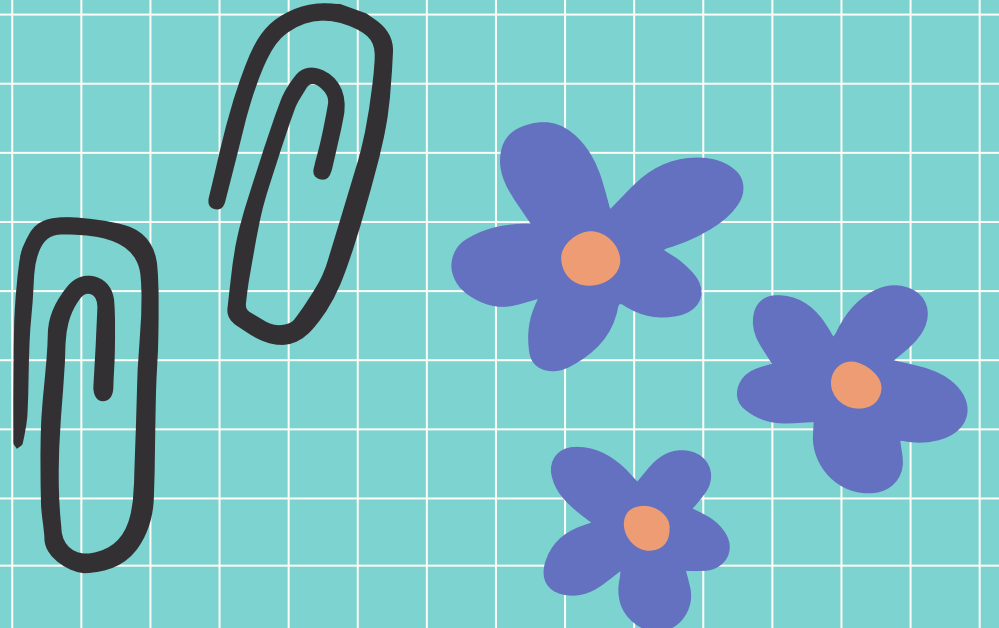
(Jackson, 2014)

SOCIOPRAGMATIC NORMS

(RULES GOVERNING THE APPROPRIATE USE OF DISCOURSE IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS)

The possibility of miscommunication may arise if the receiver has been socialized in a different cultural context and does not share the same background knowledge as you.

(Jackson, 2014)

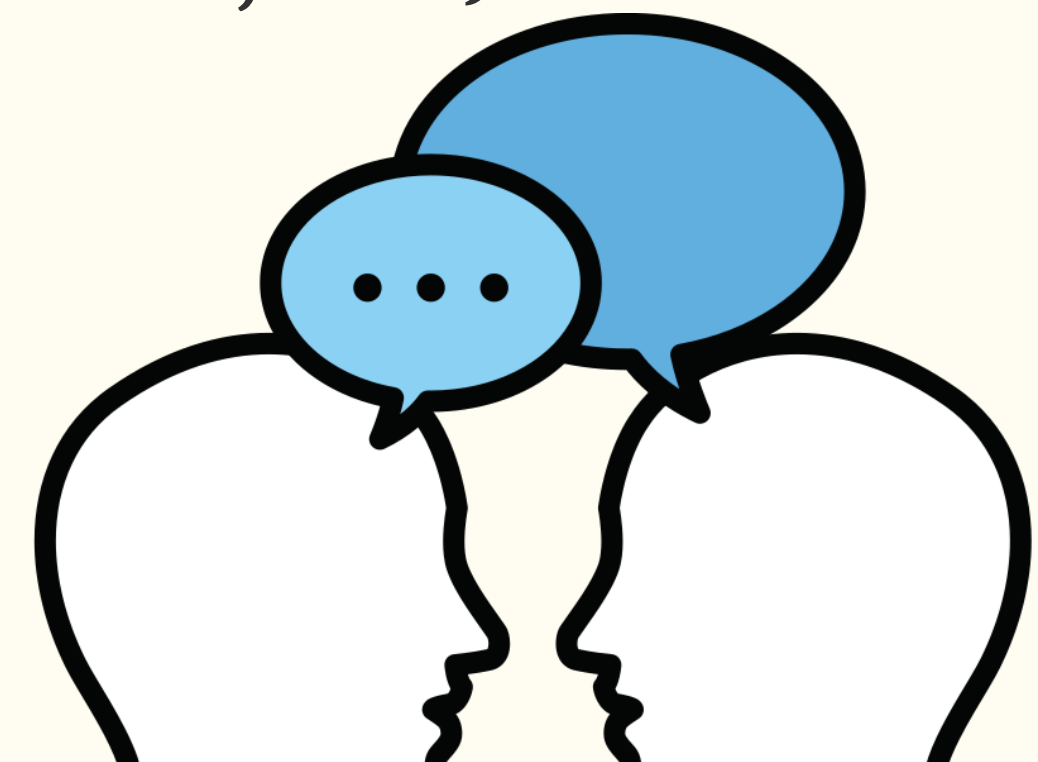


CULTURAL SCRIPTS (LOCAL CONVENTIONS OF DISCOURSE),
POLITENESS MARKERS,
NONVERBAL BEHAVIOUR

Communication is Symbolic

A symbol is ‘a sign, artifact, word(s), gesture, or nonverbal behavior that stands for or reflects something meaningful’ .

(Ting-Toomey and Chung, 2005, as cited in Jackson, 2014)





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Communication is Symbolic

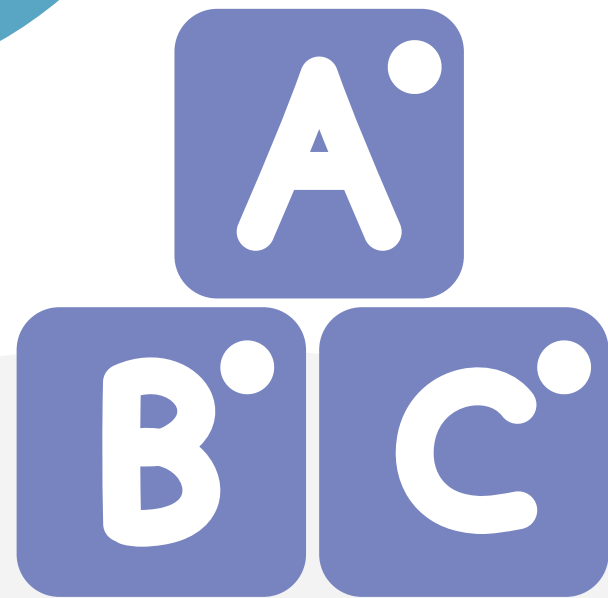
The symbols are **arbitrary**.
They are selected and **learned** within a
particular linguistic and cultural context.

(Jackson, 2014)



Communication is Symbolic

A verbal language (e.g. Arabic, Chinese, English, Russian) is a code made up of symbols



H + O + U + S + E



(Jackson, 2014)



Communication is Symbolic

Interaction, then, is the process of encoding and decoding messages. While people who speak different languages may use different codes, the process is the same.

1

People 'senders'

Encode their thoughts

2

Send the message

Verbal (oral or written
language)
Nonn-Verbal (gestures)

3

Receiver

listens to the verbal
message and translates,
or decodes it along with
nonverbal information

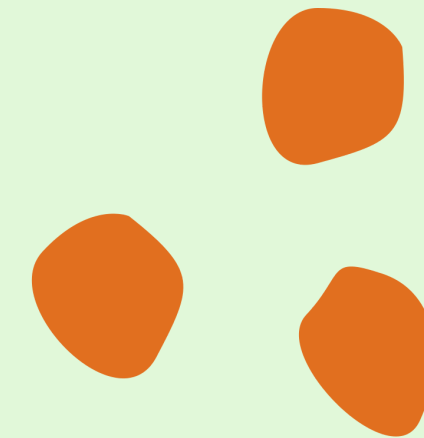
(Jackson, 2014)


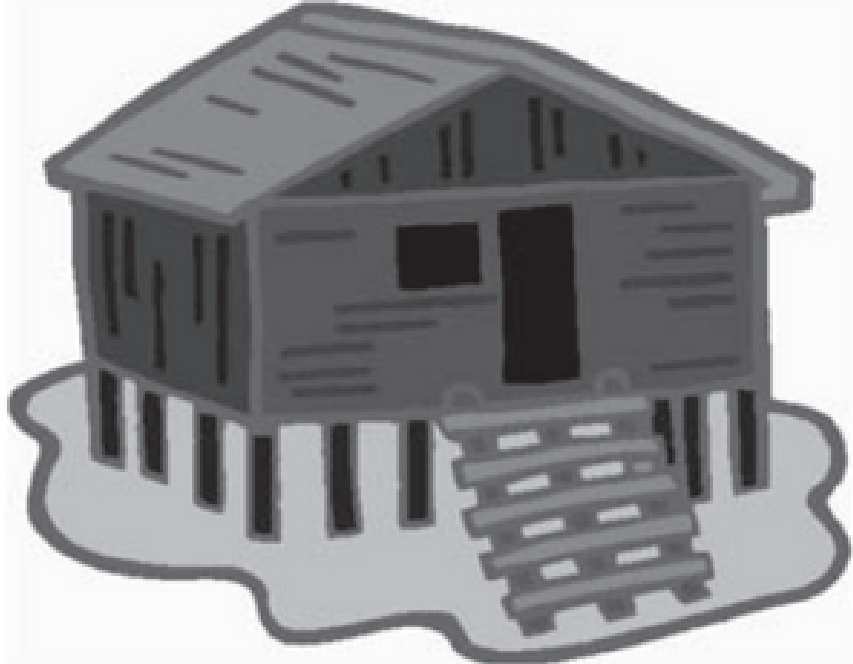
Communication is Symbolic

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

An alphabetic system of phonetic notation
based primarily on the Latin alphabet.

(International Phonetic Association n.d., as cited in Jackson, 2014).



Language	Original form/script	Transliteration (if the Roman alphabet is not used)	Illustrations of a 'house' (many possibilities in different cultural contexts)
Arabic	بَيْت	beyt	 
Chinese	家	jiā	
French	maison		
German	haus		
Hebrew	בַּיִת	beit	
Hindi	घर	ghar	
Italian	casa		
Japanese	宅	taku	
Korean	집	jip	
Norwegian	hus		
Polish	dom		
Portuguese	casa		
Russian	ДОМ	dohm	
Slovenia	hiša		
Swahili		nyumba	
Swedish	hus		
Tagalog	bahay		
Urdu	مکان	makaan	

(Jackson, 2014)

Communication is Symbolic

Linguistic codes/symbols for the word 'house'

(Jackson, 2014)

What does this symbol
mean?



In Britain, however, it is the sign for
victory.

(Jackson, 2014)

Communication is Symbolic

DO THEY USE SYMBOLS TO COMMUNICATE?



Source: Canva.com

COMMUNICATION IS BOTH INTENTIONAL AND UNINTENTIONAL

Intentional communication is a situation in which two or more people consciously engage in interaction with a specific purpose in mind. **Unintentional communication** may also be taking place, however.

(Jackson, 2014)



COMMUNICATION IS BOTH INTENTIONAL AND UNINTENTIONAL

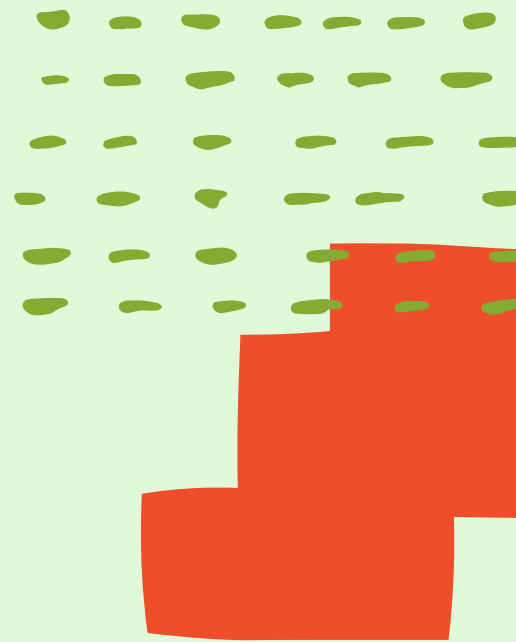
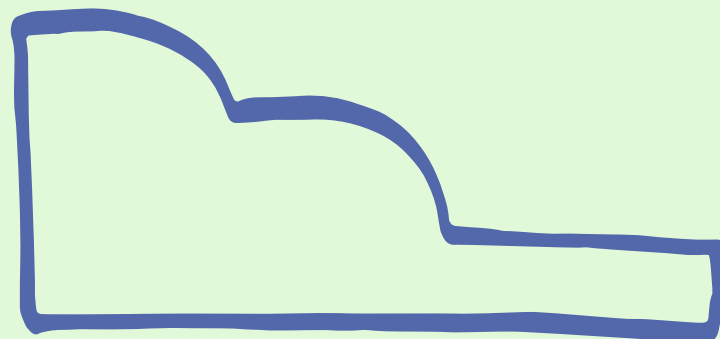


Source: [medium.com](https://www.medium.com)

COMMUNICATION IS BOTH INTENTIONAL AND UNINTENTIONAL

Cultural schema (mental representations of a context or situation) and cultural scripts (cultural rules of speaking and interpretation) are apt to vary somewhat in different linguistic and cultural settings and, initially, newcomers may find the communication process confounding.

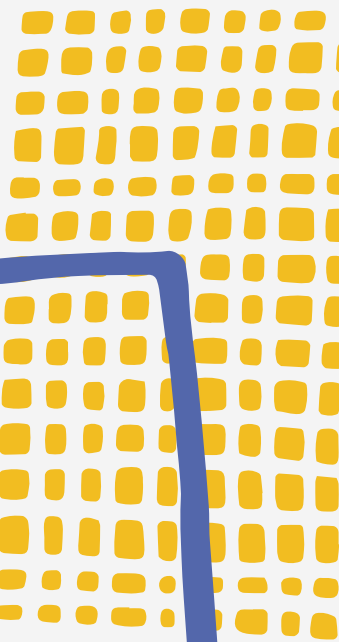
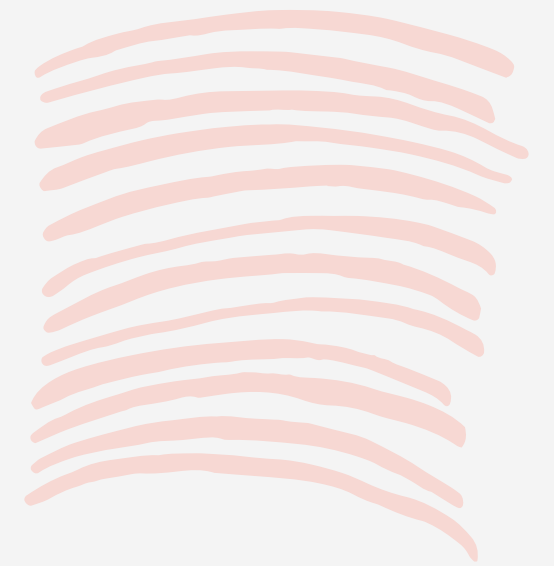
(Jackson, 2014)



COMMUNICATION IS BOTH INTENTIONAL AND UNINTENTIONAL

Mindful intercultural communicators need 'the knowledge of both verbal and nonverbal communication in order to communicate sensitively across cultural and ethnic boundaries'

(Ting-Toomey, 1999: 113, as cited in Jackson, 2014)





COMMUNICATION IS BOTH INTENTIONAL AND UNINTENTIONAL

faux-pas, unintentionally violate accepted social rules of behaviour and misinterpret the behaviours of our intercultural communication partners.

(Jackson, 2014)



Communication is situated and contextual



context is ‘the information that surrounds an event; it is inextricably bound up with the meaning of that event’

(Hall and Hall, 2002: 166, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

Contextual elements

★ preceding and following utterances and/or expressions ('co-text')

★ the immediate physical situation


★ the wider situation

★ knowledge presumed shared between speaker and hearer.

(Cruse, 2006: 35, as cited in Jackson, 2014))



COMMUNICATION IS SITUATED AND CONTEXTUAL

Types of context and contextual elements that can influence the communication process (e.g. **cultural/microcultural, environmental/physical, perceptual, psychological, (socio)relational, situational, temporal, etc.**) 

(Jackson, 2014)



Cultural

COMMUNICATION IS SITUATED AND CONTEXTUAL ✨

All factors and influences that make up one's culture (Behavior & Social Norms)

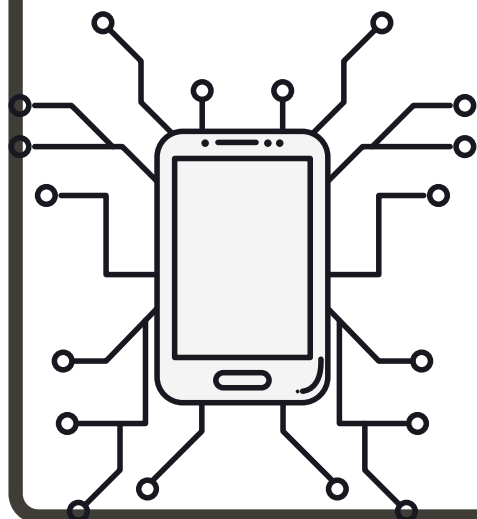
"direct eye contacts, kinship uses, greetings & social status/ position"

(Jackson, 2014)

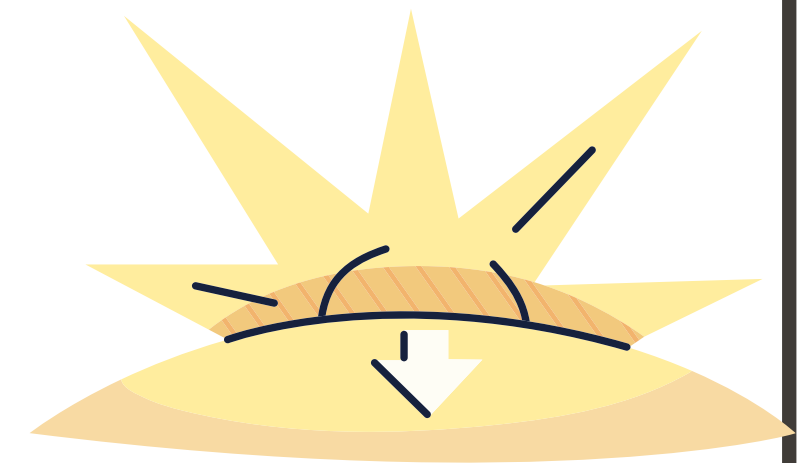
ENVIRONMENTAL

Physical environs where the communication is conducted

(location, distance between interactants, temperature, noise level, seating arrangement, technology, etc.)



(Jackson, 2014)



Perceptual

The individual characteristics of
interactants

"Motivations, intentions, and
personality traits"

(Jackson, 2014)





PHYSIOLOGICAL

The health, well-being, illness, and disabilities (e.g. hearing loss) of you and the other interactant(s)

(Jackson, 2014)


Psychological

Who you are and what you bring to the interaction, e.g., your needs, desires, values, personality, attitudes, feelings, emotion, perceptions, pressure, stress or level, trauma, self-concept, views, bias, stereotypes, prejudice and prior experience.

(Jackson, 2014)



RELATIONAL



The personal relationship between you and the other person (e.g. your history together, the feelings you and the other person have about each other and the relationship)

(Jackson, 2014)



Context and Contextual Elements

that can influence the communication process

(Jackson, 2014)

Situational ✨

The psycho-social environs, that is, the location where you are communicating

Social ✨

Power, hierarchy, the social relationship between you and the other person, social distance, cultural rules of behaviour, politeness norms, formality, history, relationship and gender

Sociorelational

Social roles and group memberships (e.g. demographics), age, gender, religious affiliation, education level, socioeconomic status

Temporal ✨

Time and timing of the interaction



COMMUNICATION AS PERVASIVE

‘We cannot not communicate’

(Watzlawick et al., 1967: 49, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

"If two humans come together it is virtually inevitable that they will communicate something to each other [...] even if they do not speak, messages will pass between them. By their looks, expressions and body movement each will tell the other something, even if it is only, "I don't wish to know you: keep your distance"; "I assure you the feeling is mutual. I'll keep clear if you do".

(Argyle and Trower, 1979: 4, as cited in Jackson, 2014)



COMMUNICATION AS POWER-INFUSED

Individuals in power 'consciously or unconsciously, create and maintain communication systems that reflect, reinforce, and promote their own ways of thinking and communicating'

(Martin and Nakayama, 2008 p. 48, as cited in Jackson, 2014).

Case Study

Jane is an exchange student. She encountered difficult situations both inside and outside the classroom. Besides she encountered a new culture, she did not understand what was happening at that time in her environment. Everyone seemed to not want to talk and tended to ignore her. Especially when in class, the lecturers even seemed reluctant to listen and see her performances in class. Even though Jane is a smart person in her home campus.



COMMUNICATION AS POWER-INFUSED

‘actual intercultural interactions are largely influenced by where one is positioned in the **power** hierarchy in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, language, physical ableness, sexual identity, and other social categories’.

(Kubota, 2012: 97, as cited in Jackson, 2014).

Communication as cultural

The verbal and nonverbal symbols we use to communicate with our 'ingroup' members (e.g. close friends and family members, people who share the same language, ethnicity and religion) are strongly influenced by our linguistic and cultural socialization. ✨

(Jackson, 2014)

Communication as cultural

People from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds have been socialized to communicate in different ways (e.g. use specific styles of communication) through **the process of enculturation, ...** ✨

(Jackson, 2014)

Communication as cultural

✦
"...Members of different cultural groups who speak the same language may have different worldviews and values. . . different meanings with the same verbal and nonverbal symbols and this of course affects the communication process."

(Jackson, 2014)


LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND VERBAL COMMUNICATION STYLES

Linguistics style & Speech style


Linguistic style refers to an individual's 'characteristic speaking pattern', which includes such features as degree of directness or indirectness, pacing and pausing, word choice and the use of such elements as jokes, sarcasm, figures of speech (e.g. metaphors, irony, hyperbole), stories, questions, silence and apologies.

One's **speech style** is made up of choices regarding a wide range of linguistic elements (e.g. vocabulary, syntactic patterns, volume, pace, pitch, register, intonation)

(Tannen, 1995, as cited in Jackson, 2014)




Communication
Accommodation Theory
(CAT) - to describe and
explain why individuals
modify their
speech communication
practices depending on
who they are talking to.



To win approval, speakers often
accommodate their speech to that of
their addressee through the act of
convergence

By accentuating language (and cultural)
differences, this strategy of **divergence** (e.g.
switching to an ethnic dialect or language
when speaking to a host national)



(Jackson, 2014)

"Communication style as 'the way in which we communicate, a pattern of verbal and nonverbal behaviors that comprises our preferred ways of giving and receiving information in a specific situation'."(Saphiere et al., 2005 p. 5, as cited in Jane Jackson, 2014)

1. how we organize and present information.
2. how we give praise and how we react to receiving praise
3. the timing and manner of self-disclosure and how we respond to the personal information that others reveal to us
4. how we express agreement or disagreement and how we respond to the way our interactant communicates agreement or disagreement to us
5. how we build interpersonal relationships.
6. how we convey politeness (and impoliteness) and how we perceive politeness (impoliteness) in the communicative actions of others
7. how we negotiate (e.g. mediate conflict situations) and respond to the negotiation or conflict management style of our interactant.
8. how we make decisions and solve problems or disputes, and how we respond to the problem-solving approach of others
9. how and when we interrupt and prefer to be interrupted (and how often) as well as how we respond to being interrupted
10. how we apologize and make requests or refusals (and other speech acts) and how we respond to the speech acts of others in various contexts and situations.

(Saphiere et al. 2005: 5, as cited in Jackson, 2014)

Characteristics of an Effective Intercultural Communicator in Second Language Situations

- Be patient. Allow more time for the interaction.
- Try to avoid the use of idioms that may be easily misunderstood; bear in mind that jokes and sarcasm often do not translate well across cultures.
- Pay attention to the content meaning of the messages you are sending and receiving.
- Be aware of your rate of speech and speak more slowly if this appears to help your listener.
- To gauge how your message is being received, be attentive to the other person's verbal and nonverbal behaviour (feedback).
- Whenever feasible, use culture-sensitive probing questions to check to see if your message has been understood in the way that you intended.
- Listen attentively and pay attention to both verbal and nonverbal messages of your communication partner before responding.

Cont.

- Be mindful of the power dynamics and their potential impact on intercultural relations and the communication process.
- Be sensitive to the benefits of convergence and the potential negative consequences of divergence in terms of your speech/communication style and language choice.
- Be sensitive to the cultural beliefs, values, gender differences and politeness norms that may underlie different styles of communication.
- Recognize your personal style of communicating and make an effort to determine how your communication partners are perceiving you.
- To further enhance interpersonal, intercultural relations, build up your repertoire of communication styles.
- Bear in mind that miscommunication may be due to language barriers rather than cultural difference (and vice versa).

(Jackson, 2014)

Questions!

1. Describe the relationship between language, culture and power.
2. Why is context important in any discussion of language, culture and power?
3. How can knowledge of the communication process help you become a more effective intercultural communicator?
4. identify five strategies to employ to become a more effective inter cultural communicator, especially in situations where one of the communicators is not fluent in the language being used.
5. Describe your style of communication. Does it vary depending on the context? If yes, how? How might this knowledge enhance your intercultural interactions?

References

Jackson, J. (2014). Introducing language and intercultural communication. Routledge.

Picture 7:

Canva.com

Picture 11:

Canva.com

Picture 18:

Canva.com

Picture 20:

<https://medium.com/bsg-sms/19-vital-principles-of-communication-with-your-client-c31f49bb0f84>