

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI

University Microfilms International
A Bell & Howell Information Company
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
313/761-4700 800/521-0600

PREVIEW

Order Number 9519528

**Effective and ineffective cross-cultural communication as
experienced by Malaysian-Malays and African American
students**

Che, Hussain Siti Rehani, Ph.D.

The University of Nebraska - Lincoln, 1994

U·M·I

300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

PREVIEW

**EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION
AS EXPERIENCED BY
MALAYSIAN-MALAYS AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS**

by

Siti Rehani Che Hussain

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The Graduate College in the University of Nebraska

In Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major: Administration, Curriculum and Instruction

Under the Supervision of Professor Miles T. Bryant

Lincoln. Nebraska

December, 1994

DISSERTATION TITLE

Effective and Ineffective Cross-Cultural Communication

as Experienced by Malaysian-Malays and African-American Students

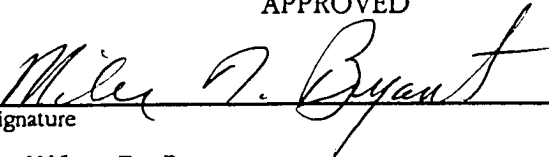
BY

Siti Rehani Che-Hussain

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:


APPROVED

DATE


Signature

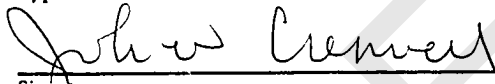
12/5/94

Miles T. Bryant
Typed Name


Signature

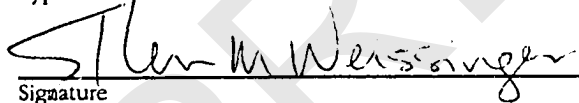
12/2/94

Elizabeth M. Kean
Typed Name


Signature

12/2/94

John W. Creswell
Typed Name


Signature

12/2/94

Ellen M. Weissinger
Typed Name

Signature

Typed Name

Signature

Typed Name



**EFFECTIVE AND INEFFECTIVE CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION
AS EXPERIENCED BY
MALAYSIAN-MALAYS AND AFRICAN-AMERICAN STUDENTS**

Siti Rehani Che Hussain, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 1994

Advisor: Miles T. Bryant

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to identify behaviors associated with effective and ineffective cross-cultural communication as experienced by Malaysian-Malays and African-American students at a midwestern university. To supplement the understandings developed from the respondents, the relationship between perceived effectiveness in cross-cultural communication and the respondents' level of tolerance of ambiguity was examined.

Design of the Study

The study utilized a mixed-method approach where participant and unobtrusive observation were used to complement the critical incidents collected through direct interviews. Additional data was collected through a written questionnaire that was completed after the interview. Twenty-seven of the thirty-two students that were approached completed the interview and the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

Data analysis for question one was done using Flanagan's category formation in the critical incident technique. Transcripts of interviews were carefully read and color-coded. A further reduction in categories was made to conduct a χ^2 for two

independent samples, Malaysian-Malays and African-Americans. Sixteen categories of effective and fourteen categories of ineffective cross-cultural communication behaviors were identified.

Findings

For both Malaysian Malays and African-Americans effective cross-cultural communication included the following categories: Positive Personal Characteristics, Cooperative Communication Technique, Cultural Awareness, and Responding to Perceived Needs. These categories are based on reported behaviors. There was, however, a significant difference between the two groups with what was defined as effective with Malaysian-Malays emphasizing Responsive to Perceived Needs and African-Americans emphasizing Positive Personal Characteristics. The ineffective cross-cultural communication included the following categories: Temperament, Uncooperative Communication Technique, Negative Personal Characteristics, Problems from Unfulfilled Needs and Misinformation. No difference in ineffective cross-cultural communication was found between the Malaysian-Malays and the African-Americans.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am finally reaching the end of my trying but fruitful journey. Before this journey I triumphed on the idea of my individual ability and prowess. I often preached to my children that the sky is the limit if you set your mind to get it. This journey in my doctoral program has modified my belief. Yes, we should strive for the best, but, as humans we have our limitations. I must have been good to come this far, but I did not do it alone. I am grateful to everyone that has made this journey possible.

I would like to thank the Malaysian Government and the Agricultural University of Malaysia for sponsoring my studies. I owe my gratitude to the then Head of the Department who helped, instead of creating more obstacles for me to further my studies. I would like to thank Encik Shoib Asimiran (at the registrar's office) for his assistance in scholarship and leave matters.

I owe Dr. Bryant much, for it was his faith in me from the beginning, demonstrated by his willingness to be my advisor, to the end that sustained my belief in myself and thus the journey. He was always willing to talk and subtle in helping me uncover my mistakes. I am most grateful because he allowed me to grow. He challenged my views but I knew he was willing to listen and by the end of the day I was able to see the other side of the coin. I am grateful for this professional growth that he had provided. I hope in seeing my fall he could also see my rise from the fall. I thank him for being my role model. As a mentor I can never thank him enough.

My committee members, Dr. Kean, Dr. Creswell, and Dr. Weissinger were sources of diversity in my learning. Together with my Chair, Dr. Bryant, they provided a unique and valuable example of remaining different but united in a course. They have enriched me professionally. They have always been supportive all along my journey and I am grateful. I will always cherish the learning from my "Great Four."

I owe an immense debt of gratitude to the respondents during my pilot and the actual study. Your cooperation and friendship were extremely valuable. Without your support, the study would never have happened.

I also need to thank Dr. Steven Wise whose encouragement during statistics was inspirational. His guidance and continued interest in helping were comforting. I was not only blessed with having helpful professors along the way but also having real friends. They were there when I cried and they were there when I laughed. Thank you Cally, Anjana, Dana, Rusnani. In this respect I also need to thank Dr. Kean and Dr. Donna Kizzier for lending me a shoulder when I needed one.

I would also like to thank Anjana Arora, Carolyn Wenburg (Cally) and Ruby D. Higgins for their professional help in reading my dissertation. As a peer member I cannot thank Anjana enough.

I have nothing but tears when writing this part of my acknowledgment. My personal note. We have gone through much pain and despair, but, I am glad we are still together. I am reaching the end of the tunnel, but, you haven't. However, I know you will be just as glad when your time comes. I want you to know, my dear husband, that I am grateful. We have done it again! Thank you.

To illustrate how much my children were in it as a team in this journey, I am inserting this note from Iza (my third daughter). "Dear Mom: This is your daughter Iza. I just want to say don't say you're never done cause I know you'll get done soon. I hope you graduate soon! Love, Iza." Together, my husband, Izani and the children, Roxana, Sheren, Iza, and Remie were the "heart and soul" of the journey. I love and thank you. We made it.

I would like to thank Phyllis Hasse for her willingness to type my dissertation under short notice.

To all those individuals whom had a share in making this journey possible, thank you.

PREVIEW

TABLE OF CONTENTS		
CHAPTER		PAGE
1	INTRODUCTION	1
	Statement of Purpose	5
	Research Questions	5
	Assumptions	6
	Limitations	6
	Delimitations	7
	Significance of the Study	7
2	LITERATURE REVIEW	9
	Intercultural Communication in Perspective	9
	Summary	16
	Intercultural Communication or Cross-Cultural Communication?	16
	Intercultural Communication Competence or Intercultural Communication Effectiveness	17
	Is Cross-Cultural Competence a Matter of Attitude, Knowledge or Behavior?	18
	Deficiencies in the Literature	21
	This Study	22
3	APPROACH	24
	Rationale for the Mixed-Method Approach	25
	The Critical Incident Technique	28
	Background of the Technique	28
	Definition and Description	29
	Theory Underlying the Critical Incident Technique	30
	The Procedure in CIT	31
	Researcher Background and Role Management	70
	Researcher's Role in Management Including Entry, Reciprocity and Ethics	74

	PAGE
The Intercultural Behavioral Assessment Indices	82
The Study	82
Verification	84
4 RESULTS	87
Research Question 1	87
Effective Cross-Cultural Communication	87
Ineffective Cross-Cultural Communication	97
Summary	107
Research Question 2	109
Research Question 3	111
Summary	117
5 FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	118
Research Questions	118
Design of the Study	118
Data Analysis	119
Discussion of Findings	119
Conclusions	124
Recommendations for Future Research and Practice	125
REFERENCES	128
APPENDIX A Questionnaire	133
APPENDIX B Approval Letter From IRB	137
APPENDIX C Adult Informed Consent Form	139
APPENDIX D Invitation Letter for Respondents	142
APPENDIX E Interview Record With Abstracted Critical Incidents	144
APPENDIX F Initial Category Formation for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication	198
APPENDIX G Initial Category Formation for Ineffective Cross-Cultural Communication	203
APPENDIX H Text on Effective Incident by Respondent 4 (Joal)	207

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1 Interview Record With Abstracted Critical Incidents	80
2 A Conceptual Map for Data Analysis	86

PREVIEW

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1 College Enrollment by Racial/Ethnic/Foreign Group	2
2 Summary on Respondents by Ethnicity	69
3 Categories for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication by Ethnic Group (Detail Version)	89
4 Category Summation for Effective Cross-Cultural Communication by Ethnic Group	96
5 Categories for Ineffective Cross-Cultural Communication by Ethnic Group (Detail Version)	98
6 Category Summation for Ineffective Cross-Cultural Communication by Ethnic Group (Detail Version)	106
7 Comparison of Perceived Ability on Cross-Cultural Communication	110
8 Contextual Details of Effective Critical Incidents Experienced by Malaysian-Malays	113
9 Contextual Details of Effective Critical Incidents Experienced by African-American	113
10 Contextual Details of Ineffective Critical Incidents Experienced by Malaysian-Malays	114
11 Contextual Details of ineffective Critical Incidents Experienced by African-American	114

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Good communication has often been identified as the cornerstone in successful teaching-learning situations (Kulik and McKeachi, 1975; Condon, 1976; Rodriguez, 1980; Norton, 1980). According to Condon (1976), communication becomes increasingly crucial when teachers and students are of different backgrounds and when the learning process may be inhibited by cross-cultural differences. As noted by Collier (1989), "attention to intercultural communication competence, furthermore, is not only timely but essential in an increasingly international and culturally diverse world" (p. 289). Global interdependence is a reality as one approaches the twenty first century, and education in the United States is increasingly becoming multicultural in scope.

The process of communication is affected by an increased number of multicultural and multinational groups in a society. This change in American society is reflected in the college and school population. During the last decade, increasing numbers of international students have come to postsecondary institutions in the United States. Foreign student enrollment has increased from 253,000 in 1978 to 361,000 in 1988 (more than 42%) (The Chronicle of Higher Education [CHE], 1992). There is also a considerable increase in native minority students' enrollment in these institutions.

Such demographic changes in the colleges have made it necessary to pay more attention to effective cross-cultural communication. According to Condon (1976),

". . . communication conflicts are likely to arise, since the white middle-class adult interpretation of American culture held by the average educator, the values he teaches through the subject matter, and even the manner in which he communicates with the students do not always coincide with those held by the latter as a result of their family upbringing" (p. 108). Similar concerns have been echoed by Baker (1983), DeCosta (1984), Campbell and Farrel (1985), Cummins (1986), Kreniq (1986), Banks (1987), Kleifgen (1988), and Reyner and Garcia (1989).

Table I

College Enrollment by Racial/Ethnic/Foreign Group(in descending order on % Increase)

Group	1978	1988	% Increase
Asian-American	235000	497000	111.4
Hispanic-American	417000	680000	63.0
Foreign	253000	361000	42.2
Native American	78000	93000	19.2
White-American	9194000	10283000	11.8
Black-American	1054000	1113000	7.2

Note. The data are from The Chronicle of Higher Education, 1992.

College teaching has recently been faulted for not being attentive to the needs of students. Higher education practitioners are seeking to develop ways to improve the teaching of college students. While multicultural education and English as a Second Language instruction have been studied in K-12 school system, there has been inadequate attention to cross-cultural communication in the college classroom and environment. Additionally, multicultural education in the K-12 system does not

usually include any study of cross-cultural communication. Hence, it is timely to look at experiences that occur during cross-cultural communication.

Some cross-cultural communication studies have compared foreign students and American students in unique aspects of cross-cultural communication. For example, Wiseman, Hammer and Nishida (1989) studied the relationship between intercultural communication competence and knowledge of host as well as the cross-cultural attitude of Japanese and American students. They found that the components of the cross-cultural attitude (stereotypes towards the other culture, ethnocentrism and perceived social distance) and one's knowledge of the other culture were variably related to the communication competence dimensions. The communication competence dimensions were culture-specific understanding, culture-general understanding and one's regard of members of the other culture.

Dinges and Lieberman (1989) assessed the communication competence of Japanese-American students and Caucasian students in Hawaii with respect to the cultural backgrounds and measured the influence of the background on judgments as observers on communication competence of persons similar or dissimilar to themselves. The results of the study suggest the importance of situational attributes to cross-cultural communication competence. To capture the complexities in cross-cultural communication they analyzed their experimental results using the 4-Way ANOVA, a complicated measure itself. According to them, "The essential point is that the 'action' in intercultural communicative competence research is in the

'interaction' of person and situational variables, which has to date been largely unexplored in the intercultural context" (p. 383).

Olebe and Koester (1989) used United States and Non-United States students in validating the BASIC, Behavioral Assessment Scale for Intercultural Communication, for its cross-cultural equivalence. The study supports the hypotheses that: (a) "The internal structure of the BASIC measure is similar regardless of respondents' cultures" and (b) "Items of BASIC have the same meaning and are operationalized similarly regardless of respondents' cultures" (p. 338). But, the regression analysis did not clearly demonstrate scalar equivalence. The explanation towards the non-equivalence suggests a need for further research. For example, either refinement of the instrument should be made or probably another type of design should be created.

Chen (1988), in her dissertation entitled "Relationships of the dimensions of intercultural communication competence," assessed four aspects of intercultural competence: personal attributes, communication skills, psychological adaptation and cultural awareness. The participants in her research were international students from the Far East, Asia, Middle East, Africa, and Europe.

No study could be found has looked at an ethnic minority's perspective of cross-cultural communication. Likewise, a comparison on the perspectives of cross-cultural communication from two ethnic minority groups from two different countries has never been done. In addition, Collier (1989) suggested that there are many issues that remain unresolved in the discussion of cultural and intercultural competence in communication. He identified three problem areas: The definition of

cultural/intercultural communications lacks clarity and appropriateness; the validity and consistency between ontological and epistemological assumptions are problematic. He questioned the consistency of research conclusions with the respondents' experiences. Finally, he stressed that intercultural communication researchers should be more explicit in matching their goals with the theoretical perspective being adopted.

To meet some of the challenges forwarded by Collier, the study utilized a mixed-method approach. Proponents of the above method conceptualize qualitative and quantitative methods as complimentary rather than adversarial. It is assumed that the mixed-methods design would incorporate the strengths of these methods.

Statement of Purpose

The main purpose of this study was to identify themes associated with effective cross-cultural communication as experienced by Malaysian Malay and African American students at a predominantly White midwestern university. The meaning of effectiveness and ineffectiveness were elicited from the respondents themselves. To supplement the understanding of the respondents, the relationship between perceived effectiveness in cross-cultural communication and the respondents' level of tolerance of ambiguity was examined.

Research Questions

The specific research questions for this research study were:

1. What behaviors are being described as effective and ineffective cross-cultural communication by the Malaysian Malay and African-American student respondents?

2. At what level of effectiveness do the respondents perceive their cross-cultural communication ability?

3. Is there a relationship between perceived effectiveness in cross-cultural communication and the respondents' level of tolerance of ambiguity?

Assumptions

This study was based on the following assumptions:

1. The information provided by the respondents is sincere and honest.
2. The participants were able to recall critical cross-cultural communication incidents.

Limitations

1. The incidents collected might not be large enough to be exhaustive as required by the critical incident technique. Since this is an exploratory study, this limitation is acceptable.
2. Generalizability of the findings might be limited due to purposive sampling procedures and small sample size. Purposive sampling ensures that a variety of subject-types is included, but it does not tell one how many or in what proportion the types appear in the population (Bogdan and Biklen, 1992). According to them, particular subjects are chosen because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the theory. Since the design does not include random sampling, it does not ensure that

the characteristics of the subjects in the study appear in the same proportion as in the population.

Delimitations

1. The focus of this study was confined to non-repeated interview of respondents in the chosen campus only.
2. The population involved in the study was confined to Malaysian Malay and African American in a predominantly White midwestern university.

Significance of the Study

This study provides the needed perspectives of the two minority groups on cross-cultural communication. Understanding their perspectives could enlighten us on what has been missing in the process of intercultural communication, especially that involving minority groups. Both groups, within their own countries, are presently perceived as disadvantaged groups with minority status in a dominant society. Eliciting Ogbu's (1983) meaning of minority status, the term is not synonymous with numerical status, but, refers to the quality of power relations between groups. The groups have often been labeled persistent school failures by the dominant groups. In addition to minority status, both groups are perceived as oppressed groups. The African-Americans, as an involuntary minority, see themselves as a disparaged group (Gibson and Ogbu, 1991). The Malays, according to Mohamad (1970), were completely excluded from the fields of employment and the British (during their occupation of Malaya--West Malaysia before independence in 1957) encouraged Chinese immigration. Even though they have always remained the majority of the

population, the Malays have low economic and educational status. Therefore, their status in Malaysia was perceived as similar to the status of African Americans in the United States.

Since communication has been identified as one of the main factors that hinders presentation of quality education, it is probable that utilizing the respondent's perspectives about cross-cultural communication effectiveness would increase the knowledge needed to help these two minority groups improve their academic achievement.

This study also adds qualitatively-induced information to the literature. According to Collier (1989) researchers should try to develop constructs and perspectives that represent the respondents' experience.

PREVIEW

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

For the purpose of this study, the literature sets the stage for the problem formulation. The literature review continued after the data collection and analysis phase. To set the stage for the study, it was assumed that a global account of the current research on cross-cultural communication was necessary especially in: (a) identifying possible areas to be studied, (b) identifying existing theories and discrepancies relating to cross-cultural communication effectiveness and, (c) a brief examination of the research methodologies used. The literature review also serves to identify some of the factors that are associated with cross-cultural communication effectiveness and ineffectiveness.

Intercultural Communication in Perspective

Due to the global interdependency, solutions to problems arising from cross-cultural communication have to be identified. Consequently, many researchers have studied cross-cultural communication (Ting-Tooney & Korzenny, 1991), and many among them acknowledged the complexity of conducting cross-cultural interpersonal communication research. Ting-Tooney and Korzenny co-edited the fifteenth volume of the International and Intercultural Communication Annual. This edition brought together current theoretical and research studies that compare interpersonal communication across cultures. Five content themes were identified:

1. some studies discover major differences while others reveal major similarities in cross-cultural interpersonal relationship patterns,