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LANGUAGE BARRIERS IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND WAYS TO OVERCOME THEM

In the contemporary era of global connectivity, interaction between individuals from diverse backgrounds has transitioned from an occasional occurrence to a daily necessity. Whether in professional environments, academic institutions, or digital spaces, international engagement is at an all-time high. This shift is driven by rapid technological advancements, increased human mobility, and deepening economic integration. Consequently, the capacity for effective intercultural communication is now a fundamental requirement for successful collaboration. However, this process is frequently complicated by language obstacles. These difficulties stem not only from limited vocabulary but also from structural linguistic differences and varying cultural expectations. Even with high linguistic proficiency, misunderstandings often arise due to differing interpretations of context and culturally specific communication styles. This study examines the primary forms of these barriers and proposes practical strategies for their mitigation.

Language barriers in intercultural communication can be divided into several types depending on where the difficulty appears. These barriers influence different parts of language use and can lead to misunderstanding, confusion, or even complete communication failure. The most common ones are lexical, grammatical, phonetic, and pragmatic barriers.

1. *Lexical barriers.* Lexical barriers are related to difficulties with vocabulary use. They occur when individuals lack knowledge of specific words, select inappropriate terms, or misinterpret their meanings. A key factor contributing to such issues is

polysemy, where a single word carries multiple meanings, as well as homonymy, when different words share the same form or pronunciation. Additionally, idiomatic expressions and slang often create challenges, particularly for non-native speakers, since their meanings cannot be easily understood through direct translation.

2. *Grammatical barriers.* Grammatical barriers arise from differences in the structural organization of languages. These include variations in word order, tense usage, agreement patterns, and overall sentence construction. A frequent issue occurs when speakers apply grammatical rules from their native language while using a foreign one. This interference can result in errors or ambiguous statements, making communication less precise, especially in formal or professional contexts.

3. *Phonetic barriers.* Pronunciation characteristics including sounds, rhythm, intonation, and stress patterns are linked to phonetic barriers. Certain sounds may be challenging to make or identify since every language has a unique phonological system. Poor pronunciation can hinder understanding and cause communication breakdowns even when words and grammar are used appropriately.

4. *Pragmatic barriers.* The use of language in everyday communication is associated with pragmatic difficulties. They include variations in communication styles, etiquette, and conversational conduct. Because they represent cultural norms and expectations, these barriers are especially important in intercultural interactions. For example, straightforward communication may be considered rude in some cultures but acceptable in others.

To minimize misunderstandings and optimize communication processes in a multilingual environment, it is advisable to implement a number of practical approaches. These steps make interaction between representatives of different cultures more productive and clear.

1) *Systematic improvement of language proficiency.*

The ongoing improvement of linguistic abilities is one of the key remedies. This entails enhancing articulation and deepening grammatical understanding in addition to

numerically increasing vocabulary. High language proficiency makes it easier for communication subjects to understand information from partners and to formulate their own ideas more accurately. Key components of this approach include working with authentic sources, engaging in real-world language settings, and engaging in regular practice.

2) Use of adapted and understandable language tools

Using simple and clear language helps avoid confusion, especially when people have different levels of language skills. It's better not to use complicated sentences, idioms, slang, or culture-specific expressions. Making language simpler doesn't make communication worse — it actually helps everyone understand the message more easily.

3) Formation of intercultural literacy

The development of cultural awareness plays a critical role in overcoming communication gaps. This includes the study of value orientations, social standards, traditions and dominant communication styles of a particular people. Understanding these differences allows you to more effectively interpret the received signals and avoid potentially conflict situations. In addition, such competence helps to choose the most appropriate model of behavior depending on the socio-cultural context.

4) Applying active listening and clarification techniques

Effective communication requires not only speaking but also attentive listening. Techniques such as asking for clarification, paraphrasing, summarizing, and confirming understanding are highly beneficial. They help ensure that the intended message is received accurately and allow participants to address misunderstandings immediately.

5) Using non-verbal communication

Non-verbal elements — including gestures, facial expressions, body language, and visual aids — can significantly support spoken interaction. When verbal communication is limited, these cues help convey meaning more effectively. However,

since non-verbal signals may vary across cultures, they should be used thoughtfully to avoid misinterpretation.

6) Adaptability and communicative flexibility

The ability to adjust one's communication style is another important factor. This may involve speaking at a slower pace, using simpler vocabulary, and showing patience toward language difficulties. Communicative flexibility also implies openness, tolerance, and a willingness to cooperate. Such an approach reduces stress and fosters a more positive and productive communication environment.

Overcoming language barriers requires a comprehensive approach that combines the development of language skills, the formation of intercultural competence and the use of effective communication strategies. No single method can completely solve this problem; instead, successful intercultural communication is achieved through a combination of different approaches that complement each other.

An important role is played by the ability of a person to adapt his language and behavior to the situation, as well as to be attentive to the peculiarities of another culture. The ability to clearly formulate thoughts, check understanding and avoid ambiguity significantly reduces the risk of misunderstandings. In addition, openness to new cultural norms and a willingness to cooperate contribute to more effective interaction between people.

Thus, the development of these skills not only improves the quality of communication, but also helps to establish trust, mutual respect and productive cooperation in the conditions of today's globalized world.

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