

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature in three main areas along with a summary:
(1) definition of communication, (2) cultural differences, (3) relevant research studies.

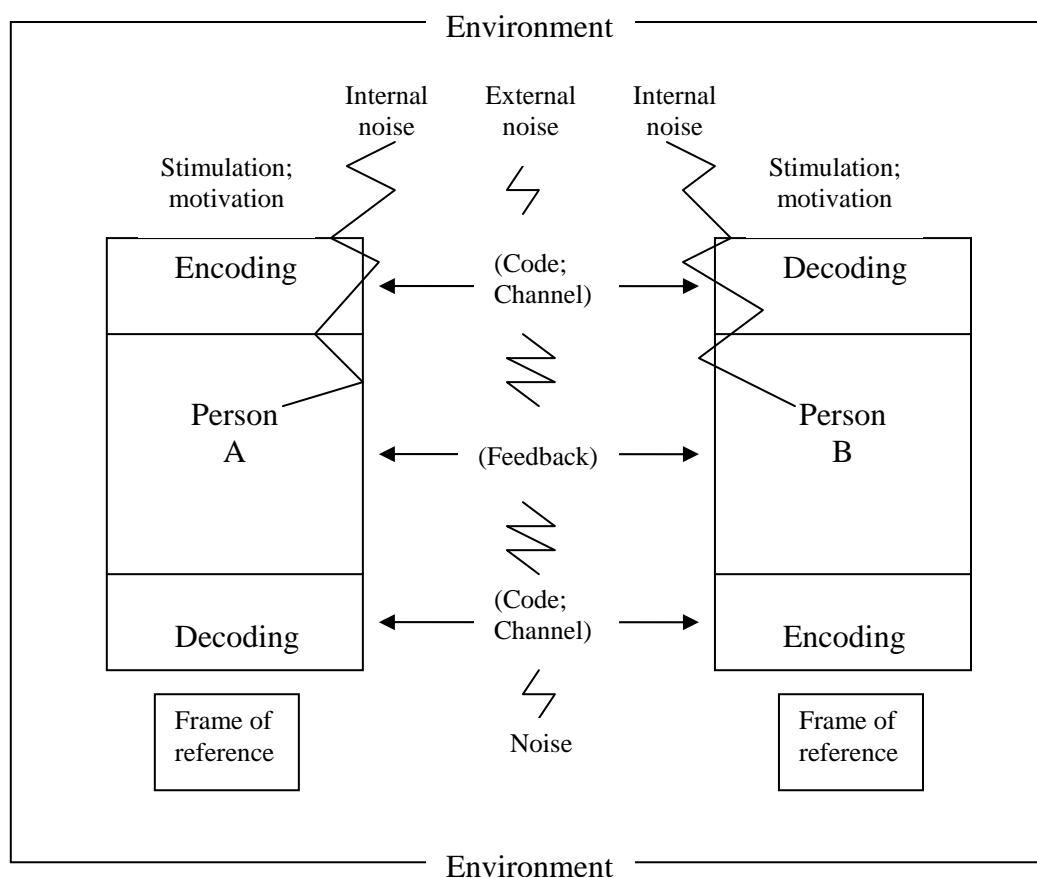
2.1 DEFINITION OF COMMUNICATION

Human beings share thoughts and ideas with each other through the process of communication. In basic activities, these are understood but it is more difficult in the complex communication. Costley & Todd (1991) declared that effective management will succeed if it can communicate to gain understanding, to motivate and to obtain cooperation from the workers.

According to Adler & Rodman (2003), they said that it is difficult to give the definition of communication as it can be defined in various terms based on users' career. However, in their study, communication is the process of human beings reacting to other persons' symbolic behavior.

Hamilton & Parker (1997) defined communication as a process of transferring thoughts and ideas from one person to another. In order to succeed in both the communication with one person, as well as with small groups and with many people, it is necessary to understand the basic elements of communication: person A/ person B, stimulus and motivation, encoding and decoding, code, channel, feedback, environment and noise (See figure 1).

Figure 1. A basic model of communication



According to Costley & Todd (1991), interpersonal communication is divided into two dimensions, verbal and nonverbal communication. Verbal communication includes spoken words and written words, while nonverbal communication is communication without words (See figure 2)

Figure 2. Type of communication

	Vocal communication	Nonvocal communication
Verbal Communication	Spoken words	Written words
Nonverbal Communication	Tone of voice, sighs, screams, vocal qualities (loudness, pitch)	Gestures, movement, appearance, facial expressions

(Adler & Rodman, 2002)

Communication is effective when the receiver interprets the message from the sender correctly and they can interact with each other immediately in order to acknowledge that the intention of the message is achieved. (Sacke, 2000) “To be an effective communicator, an individual needs to understand the importance of communication skills, which include listening, speaking, reading and writing skills” (Shotikarn Bhundhuchareon, 2002)

In complex conversations, not only words are spoken, but there is also nonverbal communication. “Nonverbal communication is the process of sending and receiving information both intentionally and unintentionally without using written or spoken language” (Bovee & Thill, 2005) Hamilton & Parker (1997) indicated that the types of nonverbal communications that are most applicable to business communications are facial expressions and eye contact, other body movements and gestures, clothing and personal appearance, distance and personal space, physical environment, and time. According to Costley & Todd (1991), the communication that mostly affects people is non-verbal in the way they look at each other or by the gestures they make. “It is no exaggeration to say that approximately 60 percent of our communication is nonverbal, the way we stand, walk, shrug our shoulders, furrow our brows, and shake our head to convey idea to others” (Shotikarn Bhundhuchareon, 2007) For intercultural communication, besides the four language skills, Horan (1976) said that a basic understanding of the terms of culture in behaviors, value, beliefs, attitudes, religions, hierarchies of status, time concepts and role expectations are also needed in order to succeed in communication across cultures.

2.2 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Culture plays a significant role in intercultural communication. “When you communicate with someone from another culture, you encode your message using the assumptions of your own culture” (Bovee & Thill, 2005) Therefore, to contribute a high degree of organization performance, the cultures of all nationalities have to be well integrated with the set of values, beliefs and behaviors. (Rose, Kumar, Abdullah & Ling, 2008) When communicating with people from other cultures, it is necessary to recognize and accommodate six main types of culture differences: contextual, legal and ethical, social, nonverbal, age, and sender.

2.2.1 Contextual Differences

Cultural context is very important dimension for studying communication. Cultural context can be divided into two types; low-context cultures and high-context cultures. Zhu, Nel & Bhat (2006) say low-context cultures tend to communicate in a direct fashion. Bovee & Thill (2005) mentioned that people in low-context cultures prefer verbal communication with, all rules and expectations are usually spelled out, whereas high context cultures rely on nonverbal actions and the environmental setting to convey the meaning. They also say that the cultural context can be seen through decision making, problem solving and negotiating.

2.2.2 Legal and Ethical Differences

Due to the cultural context, legal and ethical behavior are also influences. For example, low-context cultures consider using the written word so they tend to value written agreements and to interpret laws strictly, whereas in high-context cultures, they consider the personal pledges more important than contracts. Legal behavior, can be linked to ethical behavior. In the low-context countries where the written word and the laws are more important, people in these countries adhere to ethics. On the contrary, the social ethics in high-context countries are very loose; the people in those countries may not emphasize ethics much. For instance, bribing officials is illegal in the United State but it is a part of life in Kenya, China or even in Thailand.




2.2.3 Social Differences

The nature of social behavior varies among cultures, some of them are based on social rules, but some of them are not formal. This behavior can affect the manners of people in each country. Bovee & Thill (2005) indicate that many citizens in United State value hard work as a sign of superiority; people who work hard are better than those who do not. In some countries, women are limited to working in lower positions than men, and they do not play a prominent role in business. Moreover, the Chinese also place a greater value on timeliness than Indians do (Bhasin, 2007). Although social rules might be used in the limited ways, these can affect the overall people in the nation.

2.2.4 Nonverbal Differences

“Nonverbal communication is important to the study of intercultural communication because a great deal of nonverbal behavior is universal language” (Tuangporn Somsamai, 2005). People around the world may convey the similar meanings when they smile, laugh or cry, but some nonverbal signals, can be different. In each culture, nonverbal communication is different. Each of them may have different meanings (See figure 3).

Figure 3. Nonverbal Differences

		
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">In the United States</p> <p>A firm grip should last for several second.</p>	<p>This gesture expresses a variety of positive meanings, from “yes” to “nice job”</p>	<p>The “OK” sign indicates approval or assurance.</p>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">In other cultures</p> <p>Japanese traditionally prefer a slight bow of the head; some Southern Asians prefer to press their palms together in a slight praying motion; when people do shake hands in the Middle East and Far East, gentle pressure is preferred (a firm handshake is considered aggressive).</p>	<p>This gesture means “one” in Germany and “five” in Japan; it’s an obscene gesture in Australia and some other countries.</p>	<p>The “OK” sign means “zero” or “worthless” in France; indicates money in Japan; is an obscene gesture in Germany, Brazil, and some other countries.</p>

2.2.5 Age Differences

In some countries, the seniority plays the important part in the society (Bovee & Thill, 2005). In many Asian countries, older colleagues are respected by younger ones, the oldest employees hold a greater percentage of the organization’s power and decision-making authority. It is assumed that an older person has more knowledge, wisdom or experience than younger ones. On the other hand, younger employees in the

United States can communicate with older colleagues as equals. The discussion between youth and older employees is open, without considerations of age acting as barrier, in order to get the best results.

2.2.6 Gender Differences

“The perception of men and women in business also varies from culture to culture” (Bovee & Thill, 2005). In general culture, men are more assertive, rational, self-confident and willing to lead, to take responsibility, say Hamilton & Parker (1997). Regarding Shotikarn Bhunddhuchareon (2002), people from highly masculine cultures tend to have little contact with people of the opposite sex; moreover, less emphasis is given to women. On the other hand, countries with low masculinity emphasize cooperation and a friendly work environment, with the males and females being equal in these countries. However, man and women tend to have different communication styles so it will be useful to understand them in order to improve communication with the opposite sex.

2.3 RELEVANT RESEARCH

Shotikarn Bhundhuchareon's Research conducted in 2002

This research presents helpful strategies for effective communication between Thais and foreign staff.

Strategies	Thai staff	Foreign staff
	Mean	Mean
1. Try to learn and understand the culture differences	2.893	3.933
2. Avoid prejudice, ethnocentrism, and bias	2.518	3.733
3. Try to learn your colleague's language	3.911	3.067
4. Tolerate difference and allow flexibility	2.554	2.533
5. Get to the point	3.714	4.300
6. Try to speak slowly, distinctly, and pronounce correctly	3.964	3.366
7. Avoid using slang, colloquialisms, jargon, and idiomatic expressions	3.268	4.500
8. Use common words that general people understand	3.804	4.000
9. Use nonverbal language	2.893	3.500

From the research, it was found that for the Thai staff, the three most helpful strategies was trying to speak slowly, distinctly and pronouncing correctly, trying to learn their colleague's language and using common words that most people understand.

For foreign staff the most three helpful strategies was avoiding the use of slang, colloquialisms, jargon and idiomatic expressions, getting to the point and using common words that general people understand.