

## 6 Barriers to Intercultural Communication essay

There are six particular barriers to communication between people. These are anxiety, assuming similarities instead of difference, ethnocentrism, language problems, prejudice and stereotyping, and misinterpretation of nonverbals. According to LaRay M. Barna (1997), the developer of the list of six barriers, actual difficulties are mostly related to people with different cultures.

The first barrier going to be discussed is high anxiety. The meaning of it is when a person feels inconvenient when he or she does not know how to behave in some situations. The result is that the communication transaction fails.

Along with my personal experience troubles occurred when I came to the Swiss Hotel Management School for the first time. Everything was new and very unusual for me. For the first week I could never understand what people expected from me. The style of living was absolutely dissimilar, that is why sometimes I did not know how to behave.

The next barrier to intercultural communication is assuming similarity instead of dissimilarity. When people are acting in a home manner in the different culture it might cause a lot of problems. In order to prepare yourself for various circumstances it is very important to assume laws, habits, and attitudes of another society.

For example, in Russia there is no such a thing as a ground floor. It starts directly from the first one. Some time ago in the age of seven I went to England, not having enough information about its customs and traditions at all. Thus I was totally lost in that system.

Ethnocentrism is a third issue on the barrier list. It is based on the idea that your own race, nation, or group is better than any other. Usually ethnocentrism is common for people who come across the "culture shock". During the period of time when an individual is learning the new culture he might find this novel worst than his home culture.

Taking as an example the Swiss Hotel Management School students. Some of them, especially students from Middle East, find Switzerland as a really "cold" country. The reason for this is that in Arabic countries people used to express themselves in a very emotional manner. The result is that Middle East students are behaving very arrogant with the citizens of Switzerland.

The fourth barrier is the language problems. According to Jandt (2000) the definition of language is the set of symbols shared by a community to communicate meanings and experiences.

There are five actual factors that generally produce the difficulties in the translation. They are lack of equivalences in vocabulary, idioms, grammar and syntax, experiences, and concepts.

Indonesian students are having a lot of inconveniences with studying foreign languages for the reason that in Indonesian language there is no gender rules. That is very complicated for them to understand why for example the French word "une table" is feminine.

Talking about nonverbal misinterpretations as another barrier to communication, it can be stated that in a conversation this is more problematical to understand the nonverbal symbols without sharing the same nonverbal codes.

There are more than a few types of nonverbal interaction: proxemics, kinesics, chronemics, paralanguage, olfactics, clothing appearance, haptics, oculosics, etc. All of them are very different in every culture.

As an example, in a society where people don't kiss when they greet each other, a kissing person might be judged as a vulgar and without manners.

The last barrier is going to be discussed is about two destructive terms: stereotypes and prejudices. Both of them are to make a judgment about individuals according to group membership.

Stereotypes are the perceptions about that certain people have particular qualities or abilities because they belong to a particular race, sex, or social class. They can be positive and negative. Usually they are based on half-truths.

Positive examples of stereotyping are: Japanese people are good in mathematical sciences; French are the gods in the kitchen. Negative: Russians – Mafia – Vodka – Prostitution – Cold winter; the Arabs are terrorists.

Prejudice can be defined as an unreasonable dislike and distrust of people who are different from you in some way, especially because of their race, sex, religion, etc. For instance, talking about Indian people in Arabic countries, it can be affirmed that Indians do get less salary than other nationalities. The reason for this is that Middle Eastern people are sure that the Indian race does not deserve something more, because it is Indian.

My personal opinion is that it is unachievable to behave in an appropriate way for every single society. However, wariness, particular knowledge and modesty in discovering a new culture can help in overcoming all the six barriers to intercultural communication.