Exploring Potential Factors Causing Intercultural Miscommunication Using Chick's and Xin's Model

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ABSTRACT

Communication, a fundamental aspect of human existence, has taken on an increasingly intercultural dimension in our modern world. In addition to exchanging goods and technology across nations, people are now also sharing their ideas, thoughts, and cultural practices. However, as this cross-cultural communication becomes more prevalent, the inevitable emergence of problems, such as intercultural miscommunication, is witnessed. This research paper endeavors to explore all possible reasons contributing to miscommunication among individuals from different cultural backgrounds. To achieve this, ten participants from diverse nationalities actively participated in this study, sharing their personal intercultural miscommunication experiences. The researchers carefully analyzed these experiences, categorizing them according to pre-existing classifications found in the literature. Furthermore, the participants' thoughts and emotions related to their miscommunication encounters were recorded to gain deeper insights. The findings of this study reveal that numerous factors can lead to intercultural miscommunication. As a result, a substantial amount of effort and patience is essential to develop an understanding of cultural differences and to enhance our cross-cultural awareness. By actively investing in this process, we can foster effective communication and cultivate mutual understanding between people from different cultures, thereby promoting harmonious global interactions.

Keywords: Intercultural Miscommunication, Xin's Model, cross-cultural communication

1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of intercultural communication finds its roots in the earliest stages of human civilization, dating back to the time when individuals banded together to form tribal communities and embarked on interactions and connections with other tribes (Samovar et al., 2010). This fundamental aspect of human interaction has only been amplified in the contemporary world due to the prevalent phenomenon of globalization. The ongoing era is marked by a tremendous surge in communication between nations, facilitated by shared interests in education, technology, economy, demographics, and the pursuit of peace (Koester & Lustig, 2006). Over millennia, the seeds of intercultural communication were sown as diverse groups of people ventured beyond their immediate tribal boundaries, fostering exchanges and intermingling with neighboring communities. In the modern epoch, this natural inclination towards forging connections with others from distinct backgrounds has grown exponentially, driven by the unprecedented global interconnectedness brought about by the phenomenon of globalization. In this current age, communication between nations has experienced an unparalleled boom, a direct result of the shared pursuits and interests spanning the realms of education, technology, economy, demographics, and peace (Koester & Lustig, 2006).

It is fascinating to observe how intercultural communication has been an inherent aspect of human development since the inception of organized societies. Early humans, forming tribal units, exhibited a proclivity for interacting with neighboring tribes, laying the foundation for the cross-cultural exchanges that continue to shape our world today (Samovar et al., 2010). Presently, as globalization takes center stage, this inclination towards communication between nations has grown manifold. The modern era is characterized by a remarkable increase in global interactions, facilitated by shared interests in education, technology, economy, demographics, and the aspiration for global harmony and stability (Koester & Lustig, 2006).

The ever-expanding trend of intercultural communication has engendered a plethora of complex misunderstandings, manifesting at various levels and bearing far-reaching consequences. Among these ramifications are notable losses in business dealings, social faux pas that impede harmonious interactions, ruptures in vital relationships, and even significant shifts in foreign policy. It is no wonder that researchers have predominantly viewed intercultural miscommunication through a negative prism, given the undesirable outcomes it often entails. Dance (1970) and Schneller (1989), for instance, present a thought-provoking analogy, likening intercultural interactions to two parallel lines that never intersect but run alongside one another, devoid of the constructive spiral that characterizes effective communication. As miscommunication rears its disruptive head, those embroiled in the exchange find themselves grappling with heightened levels of frustration and exasperation (Byrnes, 1965; Aram & Stoner, 1972). The resulting breakdown in the communication process, as highlighted by Schneller (1989), Howell (1979), and others, exacerbates the situation further, exacerbating disconnections and misunderstandings. Such discordant encounters inevitably lead to a noticeable decline in the willingness to engage in further communication with members of the host community, a phenomenon adeptly examined by Goldoni (2013).

It is fascinating to reflect on the innate biological similarities shared by all individuals, juxtaposed against the staggering diversity of sociocultural backgrounds, which pose intricate challenges in understanding one another during conversations.

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These hurdles have sparked a compelling need to delve deeper into the dynamics of intercultural miscommunication and unravel the intricacies of its impact on human interaction. Given the multifaceted nature of this topic, scholars and researchers have embarked on a dedicated quest to unearth the underlying causes of intercultural miscommunication and develop strategies to mitigate its adverse effects. This intellectual endeavor encompasses interdisciplinary studies, drawing insights from fields such as anthropology, linguistics, psychology, sociology, and communication studies. Through this comprehensive exploration, a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in cross-cultural interactions emerges, paving the way for a more cohesive and inclusive global community.

A bunch of studies have concentrated on overcoming miscommunication to achieve successful communication in both intercultural communication training fields and foreign language education. Dascal (1999) is of the view that some kind of misunderstanding will always be inherent in communication because everything cannot be explicitly said, and the interlocutor based on his fallible presumptions must therefore rely on inferences. Morain (1986) pointed out that research in this field can provide a gold mine for study of cross-cultural communication. Therefore, this study focuses on miscommunication experiences of people belonging to different cultures and explores the causes and facts that result in intercultural miscommunication, and investigate these research questions:

1. What are the possible reasons for intercultural miscommunication?
2. Is miscommunication caused by the language, pronunciation, lexical, sociocultural or any other differences?
3. What are the thoughts of interlocutors on intercultural miscommunication and the factors that cause it?

2. LITERATURE OF REVIEW

To gain a comprehensive understanding of intercultural miscommunication, it is essential to delve into the intricate dynamics that exist between communication and culture. By examining the interplay between these two fundamental aspects, we can discern the underlying factors that contribute to miscommunication across diverse cultural contexts.

2.1 COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE AS INTERRELATED CONCEPTS

According to Keating (1994), communication is the aptitude for effectively exchanging one's opinions, beliefs, values, and emotions. In agreement with Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2010), language operates within contextual boundaries, influencing how we speak in specific situations and with particular individuals. They posit that the cultural background of the speaker plays a pivotal role in establishing these contextual norms. Culture, as defined by Porter and Samovar (1994), encompasses a vast array of elements, including experiences, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, hierarchies, meanings, roles, spatial relations, religion, material objects, concepts of the universe, and possessions passed down from one generation to the next. Hall (1977) further reinforces the connection between culture and communication, suggesting that culture is acquired through communication, and one's communication style reflects their cultural background. This perspective echoes the anthropologists' viewpoint, wherein culture is often described as a form of communication.

Given the intrinsic link between communication and culture, challenges in cross-cultural situations naturally arise when speakers belong to different cultural backgrounds. Xin (2007) aptly terms these challenges as "intercultural miscommunication." This phenomenon highlights the complexities that can arise when individuals from diverse cultures attempt to communicate effectively, encountering differences in communication styles, linguistic nuances, and cultural norms.

Communication and culture are intricately linked, forming interrelated concepts that significantly influence and shape human interactions. These two fundamental aspects are inseparable, as culture heavily influences how people communicate, and communication, in turn, helps to transmit and sustain cultural norms, values, and practices. The synergy between communication and culture plays a vital role in shaping individuals' perceptions, behaviors, and worldviews, fostering mutual understanding or, at times, contributing to miscommunication when differences arise. Acknowledging the interdependence of communication and culture is crucial for fostering effective cross-cultural interactions, promoting cultural sensitivity, and bridging gaps between diverse communities. As we recognize their entwined nature, we gain a deeper appreciation for the power of communication as a conduit for intercultural understanding and the preservation of cultural heritage across the globe.

2.2 INTERCULTURAL MISCOMMUNICATION

Intercultural miscommunication emerges when individuals from distinct cultural backgrounds interact, leading to communication challenges and potential misunderstandings. Researchers have extensively explored the various factors contributing to intercultural miscommunication. Chick (1996) identified five distinct sources that shed light on the root causes of such miscommunication. The first source highlighted by Chick (1996) is sociolinguistic transfer, where individuals unknowingly apply the rules and norms of their own cultural group or speech community while communicating with members of another group. This phenomenon is observable when people unintentionally use the structures and patterns of their native language when conversing in a foreign or second language. Additionally, it may occur when individuals sharing the same native language belong to speech communities with varying rules for communication.

Another source that Chick (1996) explored revolves around differences in compliments across diverse cultural groups. The exchange of compliments can lead to interactional trouble when compliments deemed appropriate within one cultural

context may be considered inappropriate or misconstrued by members of other cultural groups. Contextualization cues constitute the third source of intercultural miscommunication. These cues encompass verbal and nonverbal elements, such as lexical choices, phonological nuances, prosodic variations, syntactic patterns, paralinguistic features, style switching, code switching, utilization of formulaic expressions, and alterations in gestures, postural configurations, and facial expressions.

Intonation, as Chick (1996) noted, constitutes the fourth source of miscommunication. Different languages possess distinct intonations, and speakers may exploit intonation differently, leading to potential misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Lastly, Chick (1996) pointed out the impact of differing politeness strategies across cultures. How individuals convey politeness can significantly differ among various cultural contexts, affecting the dynamics of intercultural communication. By acknowledging and comprehending these diverse sources of intercultural miscommunication, we gain valuable insights into the complexities of cross-cultural interactions. These insights can pave the way for developing effective communication strategies, promoting cultural sensitivity, and fostering meaningful connections between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Embracing the richness of cultural diversity, and seeking to bridge communication gaps, will undoubtedly lead to a more inclusive and harmonious global community.

Hu Xin (2007) is another esteemed researcher who has delved into the realm of intercultural miscommunication. Xin's primary focus lies in exploring intercultural communication from an ideological standpoint, particularly examining the disparities between Eastern and Western cultures. In his work, Xin identifies four essential aspects through which we can analyze intercultural miscommunication: ways of thinking, value systems, beliefs, attitudes, and language use and habits. The first aspect, "different ways of thinking," refers to the inherent cognitive dissimilarities between Eastern and Western individuals. For instance, Western rationalism often adopts an abstract approach, while rationalism in Eastern cultures tends to be more specific and context-bound. A clear example of this can be observed in the communication styles, where Chinese people often discuss specific matters and provide numerous examples, while Western individuals may focus on principles, methods, and conceptual frameworks.

The second aspect, the "value system," holds significant sway in intercultural communication and profoundly differs between Western and Eastern cultures. Although values are generally generalized for cultural groups, it is crucial to recognize that not every individual within a culture shares identical values. Miscommunication and tension arise when interlocutors remain oblivious to these differences or fail to grasp how certain behaviors are understood within different cultural communities (Hall, 1959). The third cause for intercultural miscommunication, as proposed by Xin (2007), lies in "different attitudes and beliefs." Belief systems hold a pivotal role in shaping our thoughts and actions, making cultural disparities in belief systems significant barriers to effective intergroup communication. These discrepancies often lead to mistrust and misinterpretation during intercultural exchanges.

Lastly, Xin highlights "different language use and habits" as another crucial factor. Echoing Sapir's view, Xin emphasizes the inherent relationship between language and culture, stating that no two languages are precisely alike in representing the same social reality. This profound linguistic influence accentuates the intricacies of intercultural communication and necessitates a heightened awareness of the potential misunderstandings that language variations can engender. By considering these multifaceted aspects of intercultural miscommunication, we gain profound insights into the complexities of cross-cultural interactions. Understanding the nuances of thinking patterns, value systems, beliefs, attitudes, and language use enables us to navigate intercultural communication with greater cultural sensitivity and effectiveness. Embracing these differences and fostering open dialogue can foster a more inclusive and harmonious global community, where diverse perspectives are celebrated and communication bridges are strengthened.

Apart from the research conducted by Xin (2007) and Chick (1996), Lowell and Devlin (1998) also conducted a study focusing on the sources of intercultural miscommunication in a bilingual school, specifically examining interactions between Aboriginal students and their non-Aboriginal teachers. Their findings revealed that linguistic, cultural, and sociolinguistic disparities significantly hindered the effectiveness of classroom instruction. Lowell and Devlin (1998) further emphasized that pragmatic, linguistic, and sociolinguistic variations were prominent contributors to communication breakdowns in this context. This study serves as an additional crucial perspective on the complexities of intercultural communication, highlighting the vital need for cultural sensitivity and a deeper understanding of the diverse factors that can influence successful cross-cultural interactions in educational settings.

In their examination of the connection between miscommunication and identity in Wayne Wang's films, Petkovic and Skific (2011) revealed that communication breakdowns can happen even when individuals speak the same language but hail from diverse cultural backgrounds. Moreover, Chick (1996) aptly suggests that alongside these sources of miscommunication, individual differences should also be accounted for to gain a comprehensive understanding of the complexities that can arise during cross-cultural interactions. Acknowledging the intertwining influence of cultural context and individual variations provides valuable insights for fostering effective intercultural communication, promoting empathy, and bridging divides between diverse communities.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
3.1 PARTICIPANTS
Ten participants took part in this study voluntarily to share their experiences regarding intercultural miscommunication. The participants had Pakistani, American and Iranian nationalities and their native languages were Urdu, English and Persian respectively. Their miscommunication experiences generally took place in the countries they visited i.e., America, Turkey, Korea, Germany and Pakistan. The problems were observed when participants communicated with native speakers of USA English, Irish English, Turkish, Korean, German and Persian. All participants included in this study had completed sixteen years of education and were public or private sector employees. They had all undergone miscommunication experiences.

3.2 INSTRUMENTS
For this study, interviews with the participants were conducted through platforms like WhatsApp and Google Duo, with the Google Duo sessions later being transcribed for meticulous data analysis. To ensure comprehensive responses, the participants were provided with the interview questions in advance, affording them time to reflect on their intercultural miscommunication experiences. Each interview session lasted approximately 10-15 minutes, allowing ample opportunity for in-depth discussions. The interviews began with gathering demographic information, encompassing details such as the participants' names, educational backgrounds, languages spoken, professions, and the languages in which they encountered miscommunication difficulties. Subsequently, the participants were encouraged to share their experiences.

By adopting this systematic approach to data collection, the study aimed to elicit rich and diverse insights into intercultural miscommunication. Providing participants with the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and contextually anchor them within their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to intercultural miscommunication. The gathered data and participants' personal accounts served as valuable resources for exploring and identifying the various challenges and potential solutions in cross-cultural communication.

4. DATA ANALYSIS
In this study, the analysis employed a combination of inductive and deductive methods. Some categories were established deductively, drawing upon findings from Xin's (2007) and Chick's (1996) studies. Meanwhile, additional categories emerged through an inductive approach during the coding process. The coding categories utilized in this research are presented in Table 1 for reference. This dual methodology ensured a comprehensive exploration of the factors contributing to intercultural miscommunication, incorporating both pre-existing knowledge and new insights garnered directly from the data. The incorporation of these diverse analytical approaches enhances the validity and richness of the study's findings.

TABLE 1: Coding Categories

1. Contextual differences Verbal: accent, articulation 2. Sociolinguistic Transfer 3. Intonation	Categories provided by Chick (1996)
4. Individual Difference 5. Politeness strategies 6. Values 7. Thinking 8. Beliefs	Categories provided by Xin (2007)
9. The tempo of the spoken discourse. 10. Deficiency in understanding the context or the broader subject matter.	Categories sorted out by the researcher

Table 2 further provides the demographic information and individual miscommunication analyses for each participant in the study.

The table presented below displays the participants' miscommunication experiences in the leftmost column. These experiences primarily occur in everyday life contexts and informal situations, such as during travel, shopping, or giving directions. However, the underlying reasons for their miscommunication problems exhibit considerable diversity. To discern overarching patterns concerning the root causes of these encounters, a thorough analysis of the reasons is provided in Table 3 below. This comprehensive breakdown sheds light on the various factors that contribute to intercultural miscommunication and offers valuable insights into the complexities of cross-cultural interactions. Understanding these patterns can aid in developing effective strategies to enhance intercultural communication and promote harmonious exchanges between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

TABLE 2. Data Analysis

	Participants' Experience	Possible Reasons	Participants' Native Language	Interlocutor's Language	Participant's Miscommunication Language	Languages Known by Participants	Feeling About Miscommunication Experiences
Partic. 1	Partner	1. DICC: Verbal: Lexical items 2. Values 3. Beliefs 4. Thinking	Urdu	English	English	English Urdu	Embarrassed
Partic. 2	Directions in Turkish	1. Delivery/Pace of Speech 2. Sociolinguistic Transfer	Urdu	Turkish	Turkish	English Urdu Turkish	Confused
Partic. 3	Dunkirk Film	1. Values 2. Beliefs 3. Lack of Background Knowledge	Urdu	English	English	English Urdu Punjabi	Frustrated
Partic. 4	Beef in Turkish	1. DICC: 2. Verbal: Accent Beliefs 3. Delivery/Pace of Speech	English	Turkish	Turkish	English Turkish	
Partic. 5	Korean directions	1. DICC: Verbal clues: Pronunciation 2. Sociolinguistic Transfer	English	Korean	Korean	English Korean	Confused
Partic. 6	Yoke	1. DICC: Verbal: Accent 2. Lack of background Knowledge	USA English	Irish	Irish	English	
Partic. 7	Ordering Food	1. Politeness Strategies	Persian	English	English	English Urdu Persian	Respectful to all cultures
Partic. 8	Inquiring About Patient's Health	1. Politeness Strategies 2. Sociolinguistic Transfer 3. Thinking 4. Individual Differences	Urdu	German	German	Urdu English German	Embarrassed
Partic. 9	Small talk with shopping cashier	1. Politeness 2. Beliefs 3. Sociolinguistic Transfer 4. Individual Differences	Urdu	German	German	English Urdu German	Depressed, Suspicious looks
Partic. 10	Talk to Natives in Persian	1. DICC: Verbal: Accent 2. Politeness Strategies	Urdu	Persian	Persian	Urdu Persian Hindko	Excited

*DICC stands for the Differences in Contextual Clues

Table 3

PARTICIPANTS	CATEGORIES									
	Socio-ling. Trans-fer	DICC*	Polite-ness Strate—gies	Intonation	Thinking	Indivi-dual Diffe-rence	Beliefs	Values	Deli-very of Speech	Lack of Back-ground Infor-mation
Partic. 1		1			1		1	1		
Partic. 2	1								1	
Partic. 3							1	1		1
Partic. 4		1					1		1	
Partic. 5	1	1								
Partic. 6		1								1
Partic. 7			1							
Partic. 8	1		1		1	1				
Partic. 9	1		1			1	1			
Partic. 10		1	1							
TOTAL	4	5	4	0	2	2	4	2	2	2

The table clearly highlights that the majority of participants encountered miscommunication linked to DICC (Differences in Intercultural Communication Codes). In essence, these challenges predominantly stemmed from issues with verbal cues in speech. For instance, Participant 5 candidly shared an illustrative experience related to DICC: Verbal Difference - Pronunciation. This observation underscores the significant impact of language nuances, accents, and pronunciation on intercultural exchanges. Understanding and addressing these DICC factors can prove pivotal in fostering more effective communication between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. By recognizing these distinctive communication codes, we can bridge the gaps and promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, leading to more harmonious interactions in our globalized world.

"It's very hard to grasp when a Korean is explaining directions to a foreigner. Especially in my case, I could not understand his pronunciation at all. I had no clue of the place he directed me to."

6 of the participants' miscommunication experiences resulted due to the belief factor. How people understand different cultures is largely dependent upon what people consider as important. Participant 4 experienced miscommunication problem caused by the waiter's belief in Turkey.

"…I find it very hard to utter the Turkish word for beef, and the person listening repeats to make sure if he understood the word correctly. One time I ordered beef in a restaurant, but the waiter could not understand. My friends who accompanied me said that it was either because I did not say it correctly or because the waiter didn't expect to understand a foreigner. The probable reason was that the waiter didn't expect me to speak Turkish."

Therefore, in this example the Turkish waiter had a belief that a foreigner doesn't understand or speak Turkish, so his prejudice (along with some other possible factors such as accent) hindered his understanding of the participant.

Some of the participants' experience was affected by either their own values or the values of the interlocutors. An example of this is given below

"Lexical differences in my opinion can be one of the major causes of miscommunication. American people based on their idiosyncratic socio-cultural characteristics, assign different meanings to the words. Once I got myself into a very embarrassing situation because of that. When I first arrived in New York and was trying to get to know my office colleagues better, one of them, a male, was casually talking about his "partner" during an informal conversation. He was also wearing a ring on his marriage finger, so out of curiosity and also because I wanted to show that I wanted to learn more about my colleagues, I asked if he was married and what his "wife" is doing. In response he along with my other colleagues felt silent for a moment. Then, after a while he explained to me with a bit hesitance, that his "partner is not a she but he" and they were not married yet. After that incident, I got very careful with my usage of the word "partner" which in America is used not only by people in the same sex relationship but by heterosexuals also who support LGBT community."

In the above example, the participant's values regarding marriage that is it could be done just by people of opposite sex was projected when she first heard the word "partner" and therefore assumed that the interlocutor was talking about his "wife" which resulted in miscommunication. The participant realized later that different people hold different values and principles regarding marriage.

Apart from the categories given by Chick (1996) and Xin (2007), we decoded two more categories i.e., delivery of speech and lack of background knowledge. Participant 2 stressed on the delivery/pace of the speech as a cause of miscommunication.

"Asking directions in Turkish is easy, but the difficulty lies in dealing with the response that you get from Turkish people. They will bombard you with so many difficult Turkish words and gestures at once. If you are an excellent listener you might catch upon a few key words e.g., the distance, or directions such as turn right or left, but mostly it will be a cascade

of incomprehensible sound that is very hard to decipher. However, you thank in courtesy and proceed in the direction you guessed from the utterance until you stop by the next person you encounter with the hope that he would make more sense than the previous one and will speak slowly."

According to Participant 3, lack of background information can also result in miscommunication

"I teach ESL here in Pakistan, what I have discovered in my students is that many of the lessons are misunderstood because students generally lack world knowledge. So, if a person is completely dependent upon the local culture and has no frame of reference to the history it is easy to misinterpret the message. Students here are least interested in world history, so when during my lecture I refer to a historical event they usually have no clue what is being discussed. They didn't know about the battle of Dunkirk. They thought it was a fictional movie when I included it in the final project."

In the above example, we have seen that the lack of background knowledge can distort students' perception of reality. That is also dependent on how much importance is given to western history in schools.

As observed in the table, intonation emerges as the least significant factor contributing to participants' miscommunication experiences. This could be attributed to the fact that in many languages, such as Turkish, English, or Urdu, intonation generally does not alter the meaning of words drastically. However, the manner in which speakers articulate words holds immense importance in effective communication within these languages. The examples presented above vividly illustrate that a considerable portion of miscommunication experiences, particularly concerning DICC, arise from differences in accents and pronunciation of words. It is essential to emphasize that both the speakers and interlocutors possess a comprehensive understanding of the grammatical structures and vocabulary in their native languages. Nevertheless, when encountering a different culture or language, they may struggle to comprehend the nuances of pronunciation and accent, leading to misunderstandings and miscommunication.

These findings underscore the significance of recognizing and appreciating the diversity of accents and pronunciation in intercultural communication. Being mindful of these distinctions can significantly enhance cross-cultural interactions, enabling individuals to bridge the gap and effectively convey their messages across cultural boundaries. Emphasizing cultural sensitivity and promoting active listening can further foster mutual understanding and successful communication between individuals from various cultural backgrounds. By cultivating a respectful and open-minded approach to intercultural communication, we can build stronger connections and create a more inclusive and harmonious global community.

Participant 6 faced accent difficulty in Ireland, although she was an American and English was her native language.

"Back when I was in Ireland, I had to concentrate really hard to understand what the Irish were saying. I would repeatedly ask them to come again to make sense of their accent, because it's totally different from ours. Once one of my friends asked me "to pass me that yoke" and I misinterpreted it for yolk."

This example substantiates what Chick (1996) identifies that miscommunication problems can happen even when speakers share the same language.

Throughout our examination, it becomes evident that verbal factors hold significant influence in intercultural miscommunication, while non-verbal features such as facial expressions and gestures have a relatively lesser impact. Instead, these non-verbal cues proved instrumental in aiding participants to surmount communication breakdowns and overcome language barriers. An illuminating example is shared by Participant 7, illustrating how non-verbal features played a crucial role in facilitating effective communication despite linguistic differences. These findings emphasize the importance of considering both verbal and non-verbal aspects in intercultural exchanges. Acknowledging the power of non-verbal cues can contribute to improved cross-cultural understanding and bridge gaps between individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds, enriching intercultural communication experiences.

"I have experienced miscommunication problem in most countries I have visited, because of a language barrier. This makes it difficult to do even basic stuff like ordering food or finding your way around the new place, etc. However, I have noticed that there is a universal body language that is comprehensible everywhere you go and it makes being understood much easier."

In addition to participant 7's strategies for addressing miscommunication problems, participant 10 also emphasized the significance of employing specific nonverbal gestures to avert potential misunderstandings.

"In Pakistan, there were many people who couldn't speak English, but that didn't stop me from communicating with a few Urdu words I learned as a tourist, using a smiling face and acting out what I meant with my hands. In Abbottabad, a woman took me to her home even though she couldn't speak a word of English. I could tell that she was kind and later her son came over to interpret for us. I had a great evening and concluded that Pakistani people are very hospitable."

In the above example, participant 10 attached importance to using nonverbal cues such as gestures and smiling face, which helped promote positivity among speakers belonging to two different cultures. It is quite evident that people's affective side plays an important role in preventing miscommunication. Some other participants also shared their emotions regarding miscommunication experiences. Here are some examples:

Participant 8: *You can use these positive gestures and all, but sometimes it doesn't work well especially with people belonging to a low context culture. They always end up getting offended and there's nothing you can do about it. Once I*

asked my German friend about her mother's wellbeing, as I recently got to know that she got admitted in a mental hospital, in response my friend stayed quiet and responded "I don't want to talk about it". I thought maybe I crossed a line there, or I wasn't polite enough.

Participant 9: *Culture shock can be one of the factors to feel depressed in a whole new setting but I think you feel psychologically disturbed when you are unable to perform even simple tasks and get completely dependent on others.*

Participant 10: *However, the natives in villages were excited when I uttered my basic words in Persian and it sort of created a chemistry with them.*

The affective side included a mix-up of emotions, people felt thrilled, excited, sometimes sorry, depressed and in most cases embarrassed during their miscommunication experiences. Participants revealed that the majority of miscommunication experiences resulted from factors beyond their control. Participant 9 highlighted the emotional aspect of miscommunication, stating:

"If you feel like your efforts are not acknowledged on too many occasions, it is too difficult to communicate or if people are rude, inconsiderate and discourteous when you try to communicate, you find yourself not wanting to engage with people, not wanting to try or even not wanting to go out to do the basic stuff in daily life. The flip side is when you accomplish even a small task using appropriate language skills, you feel quite triumphant. Confidence is the key in speaking a second language and one needs to build on small successes in order to feel comfortable, and take more risks with another language"

The participant's statement emphasizes the psychological aspect of speaking and understanding a foreign language. Unfortunately, this crucial element is frequently overlooked during language learning and usage. These remarks underscore the significance of communication skills for individuals from diverse cultures and highlight the value of being empathetic and respectful towards foreign cultures. By acknowledging the psychological dimensions of language acquisition and intercultural communication, we can foster a more inclusive and harmonious global community, where individuals can genuinely connect and appreciate each other's linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Cultivating an understanding of these psychological factors empowers us to navigate cross-cultural interactions with greater sensitivity and effectiveness, ultimately enriching our collective experiences and broadening our perspectives.

5. CONCLUSION

In this intriguing journey through intercultural miscommunication, the study ventured into the depths of previous literature to unearth diverse reasons behind communication breakdowns. The focal point of its exploration was how individuals grappled with miscommunication in both their native tongues and foreign languages. Delving into the realm of differences in contextual clues (DICC), I discovered that verbal elements, like accent, lexicon, pronunciation, individual differences, thinking, beliefs, values, intonation, and politeness strategies, stood as formidable culprits behind many miscommunication experiences. The nuances of speech delivery and the absence of background knowledge further fueled the fires of miscommunication.

This intriguing revelation shed light on the significant role that verbal contextual clues play when engaging with people from different cultures. More notably, it underscored how values and beliefs can act as subtle barriers to seamless communication. To surmount these challenges, I recognized the dire need for teachers to impart knowledge of contextual clues to their students. This proactive measure can foster cross-cultural awareness and preempt intercultural miscommunication before it arises, rendering interactions with diverse cultures more harmonious and rewarding. A striking revelation unveiled through this paper is that achieving mutual understanding between cultures is far from facile. A labyrinth of complex factors intertwines to fuel intercultural miscommunication. As a result, unraveling these intricacies calls for a concerted effort and unwavering patience in understanding cultural differences and increasing cross-cultural awareness. Thus, with this newfound awareness, let us embark on a journey of cultural appreciation, embracing diverse linguistic variations, and navigating the labyrinth of intercultural communication with empathy and grace. Armed with knowledge and understanding, we shall pave the way towards a more harmonious global community, where appreciation and respect for different cultures flourish, and intercultural miscommunication becomes but a distant memory.

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