LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS TO BUSINESS ACROSS BORDERS

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Abstract - Effective communication depends upon the application of a mutually understandable language; a prerequisite that is almost non-existence in numerous businesses across our borders. Language is identified as one of the most austere operational problem for most intercultural business. The study theoretically approaches the barriers caused by language in Intercultural Business Communication. We identified the various ways in which language could impede effective intercultural business communication. We also provided an exhaustive and precise discourse of the effects and implications that language barrier could have on intercultural business communication. Further, the discussion examines how language affects the way by which business organisations deal with their tasks and relationship with foreign counterparts. In doing this, Shannon and Weaver theory was utilized to show that when there is language barrier; it leads to misunderstanding among parties involve in intercultural business communication. The study recommends multilingual employees, language and culture training and repetition of information for clarification as ways to curb language barriers. The study was concluded with possible solutions to language barriers that could lead to in-effective intercultural business communications.

Keywords - Culture, Intercultural Business Communication, Language barriers, Shannon and Weaver Model

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is the key methods for communication as it grasps an abstract arrangement of symbols for transmission[5]. Language is required for any sort of communication, even individuals that lack discourse speak with character language. Language enables people to convey, it also guarantees the coherence of culture. It is the way to social/cultural transmission, as the older generation teaches the younger generation through language; the proper behaviour, what to do and how to utilize their language.

[3] asserts that language is an illustrative asset that people use to accomplish and express cultural and social ideas. [23] opines that language is utilized in every part of our lives, incorporating into our contemplations and dreams. However, no language can ever be unprejudiced, considering the way that the language verbally expressed is indistinguishably bound with the history and culture of the people who speak it. Misinterpretations can often arise, especially among those that are of different cultures.

[5] opine that diverse languages are different languages that are related with various idea designs as the words and a linguistic structure of every language is one of a kind. The author stresses that the language a person speaks in this manner decides essentially the idea of that individual's thoughts. We believe languages are lexically not unique, but a con-glomeration of pieces of stuff, some of which are our own and inherited, and some borrowed. Apart from lexical similarities, there are also similar grammatical structures in different languages. Whether they are associated with different thought patterns, is difficult to say, because these patterns certainly vary not only because of linguistic reasons, but even regarding social and political aspects. Attention to intercultural contrasts is a fundamental issue in intercultural business communication. Businessmen dealings and consulting in an intercultural situation need to consider language-related perspectives and focus on explicit examples of reasoning, feeling, and acting which differ across cultures. Language assumes a key job in all business exchanges.[24] asserts that the business techniques, objectives, goals, and practices in intercultural business communication transform into a fundamental bit of the communication procedure and help create a new environment out of the synergy of culture, communication, and business.

[7] postulate language differences to have a negative impact on relationship building. [14] support that a situation of multilingualism may pose a challenge among parties involve in business communication across borders. Business communication becomes difficult in circumstances where individuals do not understand each other's language. The study defines language barrier as inability to communicate effectively using a language. The study defines language barrier as incapability of parties involved in intercultural business communication to communicate effectively using one language.

II. SHANNON AND WEAVER THEORY

Shannon and Weaver, the proponents of the theory, presented a system in the receiver which modified the differences between the transmitted and received signal. According to [10], this correcting device was the portent of the presently utilized idea of feedback.[8] affirm that the proponents of the theory adopt a practical approach of communication that focus on refining the transmission process-tools that will help to achieve an effective communication. [9] adds that the model simplifies communication by analysing communication processes and unleash the barriers to communication to achieve an effective

communication. [22]believes that noise effect (barrier) on the reception and understanding of the message by the receiver was the greatest concern of Shannon and Weaver. Effective communication between sender and receiver, as well as the understanding of the message that is conveyed is emphasized by Steinberg.

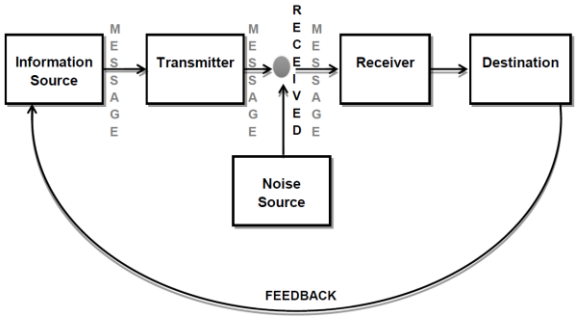


Figure 1:Shannon and Weaver's model of communication
Source: Hartley &Bruckmann (2002, p. 12)

Concepts such as Information source, transmitter, noise, channel, message, receiver, channel, information destination, encode and decode were dealt with by the model. This model is specially designed to advance effective communication between conveyer and receiver of the message [21]. The proponents of the theory also recognize "Noise" which we refer to 'barrier' in this study as a factor which may affects communication process.

At the centre of the model is noise which may distorts communication. [6] identify noise as whatsoever that can distort message to make a meaningful meaning to the receiver. Noise could be physical interruptions that may hamper the listening of the receiver. To achieve an effective communication, the message that sender intends to send must be well understood by the audience; there must also be an agreement of understanding between the sender and the receiver of the message. Whenever business message is communicated inter-culturally (or encoded), noise (language barrier) may sneak in between the ideal meaning of the message in the sender's mind and the words they utter. When the receiver tries to decode (interpret) the message, noise may again intersperse itself between the sender's intended meaning and the receiver's own perception of the words. Hence, the two speakers' different perceptions of reality and other noisy influences can cause the message to become distorted, affect their understanding of the message and cause them to react in different and unpredictable ways. In summary, Shannon and Weaver indicate that message is likely to be distorted during transmission between sender and receiver. They refer to this as "noise", or disturbance, which we refer to barrier in this study. The theory is essential in knowing the barriers that affect effective intercultural business communication, or why message is not understood in its intended context [18] To achieve an effective intercultural business communication, feedback on the received message is imperative to determine whether the message is well understood in its precise context. [19] pronounce feedback to be the response of receiver to the source which assists the source to determine if the message is understood as intended. In intercultural business communication, feedback from the receiver is determined by the level of understanding of the message. To receive an appropriate feedback, non-verbal behaviour of the source must reflect the actual meaning of the message.

Non-verbal communication primary function is to convey understanding by consolidating, substituting, or contrasting verbal message [1]. Nonverbal communication is used most times to inspire audience and control conversational flow. Though, non-verbal communication consists of many things that reflect or are in harmony with the message in different ways. Gestures and mimics differ from one another as do gazes and motions related to proximity between the collocutors, for example. It is worth noted that the non-verbal communication does not take place only, when people talk face-to-face but even beyond it as when they are engaged in talking on the phone. There, the non-verbal communication contains pauses and non-linguistic sounds such as sighing and clearing one's throat, for example. All these behavioural factors influence the interaction, that is, they affect their part, whether communicative barriers arise during the interaction or not.

III. LANGUAGE AS THE MAIN BARRIER TO INTERCULTURAL BUSINESS COMMUNICATION

Recent studies have outlined the failure of some business across borders to three noteworthy elements: the absence of intercultural aptitudes and ability, the powerlessness to communicate successfully in a worldwide setting, and the inability to apply proper manners in business communication. We are of the view that the close connection between language and culture, that is, differences between languages combine with cultural differences may create language barriers, since it takes time to learn a language and culture of a region or a country.

Thus, business organisations from all nations on the planet must welcome the significance of understanding culture which is the way of life just as the values of their partners to create intercultural communication thoughtfulness and appropriateness toward each other.According to [2], "No language can exist except if it is saturated with the setting of culture; and no culture can exist which does not have at its centre, the structure of natural language. Language is the heart within the body of culture, and it is the interaction between the two that results in the continuation of life-energy. Similarly, the surgeon, working on the heart, cannot disregard the body that encompasses it, so the translator treats the content in detachment from the culture at his hazard'. [20]

identifies language differences as one of the six stumbling blocks in cross-cultural communications and understanding:

IV. CAUSES OF LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Difference in language

Distinction in language is one of the most evident hinderance to business communication across borders; as two individuals talking two unique dialects (languages) cannot speak with one another. For instance, a South African businessman goes to Japan, he does not speak nor understand Japanese and most people in Japan do not understand English. Along these lines, when the South African businessperson talks, the communication is insignificant as the other Japanese specialist does not get it.

Regional Accents, Dialects and Lingo

The accents and dialect (utilisation of words) of people belonging to different places and culture differs even if their language is same. Even though languages are the equivalent in individuals utilizing various tongues and accents, the implications, suggestions and elucidations of words are extraordinary, which may prompt different sorts of false impressions. For instance, if a Scottish converses with an individual from London, they would not understand most of the words despite that the two of them communicate in English. The word ham and bacon can be utilized reciprocally in Scotland; however, they mean different things in England.

Likewise, lingo is the rearranged language utilized between individuals who do not speak common language. The ramifications of words and expressions can make false impressions. For instance, the condensing "LOL" utilized in chat language used to mean Lots of Love previously, which changed to Laugh Out Loud. If someone says LOL, the second individual can interpret the meaning in any capacity they need or from their comprehension. Individuals utilize both the abbreviations as indicated by the specific circumstance and need.

[4]assert that differences in accents presents an extra challenge for verbal communication over written communication as people in most high-context communication culture countries like Japan were more likely to prefer email communication over phone calls. The primary reason behind this was Japanese regularly would be better in written than spoken language abilities and could compose messages at their very own pace. Additionally, they could enlist the assistance of somebody to interpret significant communications.

No Clear Speech

Individuals who talk softly or in a little voice may not be well understood. The sender may state something while the recipient may comprehend something different. Despite speaking shared language, individuals may experience issues understanding the significance of the message and the feedbacks. This may shape a hindrance to communication.

Jargons and Slang

Jargons are the specialized words utilized in communication. It may be distinctive as indicated by various professions, specialty and specialized field of an individual. For instance, commonly used terminologies by professionals like doctors and lawyers are quite distinct and may not be easily transferable across disciplines and professions. If they engage in conversation, they are not likely to understand each other clearly. Jargons like adjournment (language utilized by legal counsellors and police utilized for postponing a preliminary for respondent), BP (therapeutic language for Blood weight), and so on are just utilized by individuals in similar profession which may be a reason for language hindrance. Similarly, the utilization of slang likewise makes communication incapable. For instance, the utilization of word "weed" to portray marijuana can go about as an obstruction for the general population who do not have the foggiest idea about the slang meaning.

Word Choice

The choice of word utilized in intercultural business communication must be well-thought-out before engaging foreign counterpart in conversation. The words utilized by a specific individual to demonstrate their concession to something can be taken as mockery which is negative in nature. A strategic distance should be maintained from ambiguous words as it does not send the proper meaning and can be translated in various manner. In this way, the message would not be sent as expected which goes about as a sort of language hindrance in intercultural business communication.

Literacy and Linguistic Ability

[1] posit that proficiency and education builds the need to adapt new words, it probably would not be the main reason. Individuals can build their vocabulary by reading and having interest in language as well. Vocabulary is likewise less if an individual uses the language as their informal language. [4] believe that etymological capacity is the ability of an individual in a specific language. If a person with high vocabulary and linguistic ability negotiate business across border with another with low ability, the second person will not comprehend the words utilized and it can constantly prompt miscommunication of entire message.

Grammar and Spelling

Grammar and spelling become a hindrance in communication as individuals from various places of

the world can be utilizing it distinctively even in a specific word [16]. Similarly, sentence structure and spelling mistakes create a huge communication hinderance in written communication. For example, a business person makes a mistake of typing done as don. The spelling and sentence structure checker of the PC does not mark it as wrong as don is additionally a right word. Yet, the word can change the entire significance of the sentence or make the sentence not justifiable. Communications process would be severely disturbed where language is a barrier between a business organisation and its foreign counterparts, the free-flow of information will be hindered, and commonness of understanding would be difficult to achieve [17].

Possible Solutions to Language Barriers

1. Repetition

Asking your business counterparts in intercultural business communication to repeat unclear messages, this will help in checking on understanding the message by asking your partner to repeat the information you have just given. Providing descriptive instances, and building in-frequent summaries, especially in business transaction can eliminate barrier that language could cause in reaching an effective communication in business [15].

2. Language and culture training

Many business organisations consider language and culture training as a considerable solution to barrier caused by language [25]. We are of the opinion that if people indulging in business across borders learn more languages and get to know more cultures, it will reduce the menace that language poses to effective intercultural business communication. Business organisation representatives working across borders should be well trained in the art of language and conversation; as this will reduce the challenges that language could pose in intercultural business communication.

3. Machine Translation (MT) and Machine Interpretation (MI)

Machine transmission is a solution that is mostly practical for written materials (though portable translation machines do exist for face-to-face interaction). This portable translation machine is mostly usable in a situation where the parties involved in intercultural business communication do not understand each other language. [13] describe machine translation system as "As a system which includes a database for storing various information, database management section for per forming database management, a bilingual correspondence data record subsystem for performing recording/learning processing of translation examples, a translation subsystem for performing translation processing, and dictionary management utilities for performing dictionary management and database transmission/reception processing.

MT is capable of working cost effectively for most translation needs where the objective is to extract information from the source text and communicate that information into a target text in a second language [12].

According to [12]), MI is more of recent but is essentially a machine translation kernel with a speech-recognition front-end (in the source language) and a post-translation speech generation module (in the target language).

The bilingual correspondence data recording section records English and Japanese bilingual correspondences by using English and Japanese sentences stored in the same file or different files. The recorded bilingual correspondences are linked in units of parts by a bilingual correspondence learning section. In performing translation, an English-to-Japanese translation section and the like generate a translation of an original sentence as a translation target by using parts and the like which have undergone learning/recording processing. The dictionary management utilities perform database transmission/reception processing to/from another machine translation system".

4. External translators or interpreters

External translators or interpreters could be used to negotiate the language barrier that could hinder effective intercultural business communication. [11]) aver that the huge costs is required for expert interpreters and mediators; they are only used to translate significant documents, such as contracts and specialised documentation, and to give synchronous elucidation at significant executive gatherings or video-conferences. The use of these experts could lessen barriers caused by language in intercultural business meetings. The problem with external translators or interpreters is that they are often not familiar with the professional matter [25]External translators could still be very valuable in business communication that cut across borders.

5. Bilingual employees as intermediaries or translation machines

Business organisation that transacts business across borders should consider hiring employees that are able to speak different languages as connecting pins to their business associates in foreign countries. This connecting pins would eliminate the option of external interpreters and as well make the conversation free-flow as he is familiar with the language of the business. These employees would act as communication nodes in the business organisation and invariably reduce the barriers that might be caused by language.

6. Locally hired non-native personnel

To reduce the chance of language barrier in business across borders, business organisation could hire local

non-native personnel. These noon-native personnel are individuals that are residents in the host country, who can speak and understand the language and culture, who are local hires; not expatriates or inpatriates. For example, a South African living in Japan could be hired by South African company when transacting business in Japan to ease language difficulty. These local hired familiarity with cultures and languages of both countries make them perfect extension people.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Language difficulty results in reduced understanding of communication, relationship and non-adherence to business strategies. Language barriers are directly associated with reduced business transactions across the border. As we have pointed-out, language problems are common due to inability of business people to understand the language and culture of their host business partners and lack of interpreters. Poor and improper way of communication could unfavourably affect their business and invariably leads to misunderstanding which can eventually altered their business relationship. Inability to communicate effectively in a business-related communication across border will have negative consequences on the side of both parties.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Questions should be asked repeatedly whenever message communicated is not clear or understood in a business transaction across border. It should be noted by the parties that 'No crime in asking'. To reach an effective communication; messages not clear should be asked to be repeated for clarification.

Multi-lingual employees should be the target of business organisation that indulges in business across border. Employees that have ability to understand and speak diverse languages will be capable to negotiate on behalf of their employers (business organisations) in a community/country where they understand the language and the culture with no extra charges. This will help to alleviate the cost of incurring an interpreter for business transaction across the border.

Business organisations should organise training on languages and culture for their expatriate employees. Short courses and training on languages and culture will help in reducing the barriers that language might infringe on inter-cultural business communication. This training will introduce them (employees) to the custom and norms of the nationals they intend to transact business with. It will expose the employees to cultural issues that may make them understand the customs and norms of their host business partners.

Future research could focus on primary research about challenges business organisations face in doing business in non-English speaking countries and as well on how language difference affects business across borders especially in different context communication cultures (High context culture and Low context culture).

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